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Balzac, Honoré de.

A WOMAN OF THIRTY
A START IN LIFE

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PREFACE.

"La Femme de Trente Ans," which opens the volume, is tainted with a kind of sentimentalism which, in Balzac's hands and to English taste, very rarely escapes a smatch of the rancid. As M. de Lovenjoul's patient investigations have shown, and as the curiously wide date 1828–1844 would itself indicate to any one who has carefully studied Balzac's ways of proceeding, it is not really a single story at all, but consists of half a dozen chapters or episodes originally published at different times and in different places, and stuck together with so much less than even the author's usual attention to strict construction, that the general title is totally inapplicable to the greater part of the book, and that the chronology of that part to which it does apply fits in very badly with the rest. This, however, is the least of the faults of the piece. It is more—though still not most—serious that Balzac never seems to have made up anything like a clear or consistent idea of Julie d'Aiglemont in his mind. First she is a selfish and thoughtless child; then an angelic and persecuted but faithful wife; then a somewhat facile victim to a very commonplace seducer, after resisting an exceptional one. So, again, she is first a devoted mother, then an almost unnatural parent, and then again devoted, being punished *par où elle a pêché* [however she may sin] once more. Even this, however, might have been atoned for by truth, or grace, or power of handling. I cannot find much of any of these things here. Not to mention the unsavoriness of part of Julie's trials, they are not such as, in me at least, excite any sympathy; and Balzac has drenched her with the sickly sentiment above noticed to an almost nauseous extent. Although he would have us take the Marquis as a brutal husband, he does not in effect represent

him as such, but merely as a not very refined and rather clumsy "good fellow," who for his sins is cursed with a *mijaurée* [affected] of a wife. The Julie-Arthur love-passages are in the very worst style of "sensibility;" and though I fully acknowledge the heroism of my countryman Lord Arthur in allowing his fingers to be crushed and making no sign—although I question very much whether I could have done the same—I fear this romantic act does not suffice to give verisimilitude to a figure which is for the most part mere pasteboard, with sawdust inside and tinsel out. Many of the incidents, such as the pushing of the child into the water, and, still more, the scene on shipboard where the princely Corsair takes millions out of a piano and gives them away, have the crude and childish absurdity of the "Œuvres de Jeunesse," which they very much resemble, and with which, from the earliest date given, they may very probably have been contemporary. Those who are fortunate enough to find Julie, in her early afternoon of *femme incomprise* [non-compromised woman], attractive, may put up with these defects. I own that I am not quite able to find the compensation sufficient. The worse side of the French "sensibility" school from Rousseau to Madame de Stael appears here; and Balzac, genius as he was, had quite weak points enough of his own without borrowing other men's and women's.

It takes M. de Lovenjoul nearly three of his large pages of small type to give an exact bibliography of the extraordinary mosaic which bears the title of "La Femme de Trente Ans." It must be sufficient here to say that most of its parts appeared separately in different periodicals (notably the "Revue de Paris") during the very early thirties; that when in 1832 most of them appeared together in the "Scènes de la Vie Privée" they were independent stories; and that when the author did put them together, he at first adopted the title "Même Histoire."

The second story in the volume, a very slight touch of un-

necessary cruelty excepted, is one of the truest and most amusing of all Balzac's *repertoire;* and it is conducted according to the orthodox methods of poetical justice. It is impossible not to recognize the justice of the portraiture of the luckless Oscar Husson, and the exact verisimilitude of the way in which he succumbs to the temptations and practical jokes (the first title of the story was "Le Danger des Mystifications") of his companions. I am not a good authority on matters dramatic; but it seems to me that the story would lend itself to the stage in the right hands better than almost anything that Balzac has done. Half an *enfant terrible* and half a Sir Martin Mar-all, the luckless Oscar "puts his foot into it," and emerges in deplorable condition, with a sustained success which would do credit to all but the very best writers of farcical comedy, and would not disgrace the very best.

In such pieces the characters other than the hero have but to play contributory parts, and here they do not fail to do so. M. de Sérizy, whom it pleased Balzac to keep in a dozen books as his stock example of the unfortunate husband, plays his part with at least as much dignity as is easily possible to such a personage. Madame Clapart is not too absurd as the fond mother of the cub; and Moreau, her ancient lover, is equally commendable in the not very easy part of a "protector." The easy-going ladies who figure in Oscar's second collapse display well enough that rather facile generosity and good-nature which Balzac is fond of attributing to them. As for the "Mystificators," Balzac, as usual, is decidedly more lenient to the artist folk than he is elsewhere to men of letters. Mistigris, or Léon de Lora, is always a pleasant person, and Joseph Bridau always a respectable one. Georges Marest is no doubt a bad fellow, but he gets punished.

Nor ought we to omit notice of the careful study of the apprenticeship of a lawyer's clerk, wherein, as elsewhere no doubt, Balzac profited by his own novitiate. Altogether the story is a pleasant one, and we acquiesce in the tempering

of the wind to Oscar when that ordinary person is consoled for his sufferings with the paradise of the French bourgeois —a respectable place, a wife with no dangerous brilliancy, and a good *dot*.

G. S.

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A WOMAN OF THIRTY.

To Louis Boulanger, Painter.

I.

EARLY MISTAKES.

It was a Sunday morning in the beginning of April, 1813, a morning which gave promise of one of those bright days when Parisians, for the first time in the year, behold dry pavements underfoot and a cloudless sky overhead. It was not yet noon when a luxurious cabriolet, drawn by two spirited horses, turned out of the Rue de Castiglione into the Rue de Rivoli, and drew up behind a row of carriages standing before the newly opened barrier half-way down the Feuillant Terrace. The owner of the carriage looked anxious and out of health; the thin hair on his sallow temples, turning gray already, gave a look of premature age to his face. He flung the reins to a servant who followed on horseback, and alighted to take in his arms a young girl whose dainty beauty had already attracted the eyes of loungers on the terrace. The little lady, standing upon the carriage step, graciously submitted to be taken by the waist, putting an arm around the neck of her guide, who set her down upon the pavement without so much as ruffling the trimming of her green rep dress. No lover would have been more careful. The stranger could only be the father of the young girl, who took his arm familiarly, without a word of thanks, and hurried him into the garden of the Tuileries.

The old father noted the wondering stare which some of the young men gave the couple, and the sad expression left his face for a moment. Although he had long since reached the

time of life when a man is fain to be content with such illusory delights as vanity bestows, he began to smile.

"They think you are my wife," he said in the young lady's ear, and he held himself erect and walked with slow steps, which filled his daughter with despair.

He seemed to take up the coquette's part for her; perhaps of the two, he was the more gratified by the curious glances directed at those little feet, shod with plum-colored prunella; at the dainty figure outlined by a low-cut bodice, filled in with an embroidered chemisette, which only partially concealed the girlish throat. Her dress was lifted by her movements as she walked, giving glimpses higher than the shoes of delicately moulded outlines beneath open-work silk stockings. More than one of the idlers turned and passed the pair again, to admire or to catch a second glimpse of the young face, about which the brown tresses played; there was a glow in its white and red, partly reflected from the rose-colored satin lining of her fashionable bonnet, partly due to the eagerness and impatience which sparkled in every feature. A mischievous sweetness lighted up the beautiful, almond shaped dark eyes, bathed in liquid brightness, shaded by the long lashes and curving arch of eyebrow. Life and youth displayed their treasures in the petulant face and in the gracious outlines of the bust, unspoiled even by the fashion of the day, which brought the girdle under the breast.

The young lady herself appeared to be insensible to admiration. Her eyes were fixed in a sort of anxiety on the palace of the Tuileries, the goal, doubtless, of her petulant promenade. It wanted but fifteen minutes of noon, yet even at that early hour several women in gala dress were coming away from the Tuileries, not without backward glances at the gates and pouting looks of discontent, as if they regretted the lateness of the arrival which had cheated them of a longed-for spectacle. Chance carried a few words let fall by one of these disappointed fair ones to the ears of the charming stranger,

and put her in a more than common uneasiness. The elderly man watched the signs of impatience and apprehension which flitted across his companion's pretty face with interest, rather than amusement, in his eyes, observing her with a close and careful attention, which perhaps could only be prompted by some after-thought in the depths of a father's mind.

It was the thirteenth Sunday of the year 1813. In two days' time Napoleon was to set out upon the disastrous campaign in which he was to lose first Bessières, and then Duroc; he was to win the memorable battles of Lutzen and Bautzen, to see himself treacherously deserted by Austria, Saxony, Bavaria, and Bernadotte, and to dispute the dreadful field of Leipsic.* The magnificent review commanded for that day by the Emperor was to be the last of so many which had long drawn forth the admiration of Paris and of foreign visitors. For the last time the Old Guard would execute their scientific military manœuvres with the pomp and precision which sometimes amazed the Giant himself. Napoleon was nearly ready for his duel with Europe. It was a sad sentiment which brought a brilliant and curious throng to the Tuileries. Each mind seemed to foresee the future; perhaps, too, in every mind another thought was dimly present, how that in that future, when the heroic age of France should have taken the half-fabulous color with which it is tinged for us to-day, men's imaginations would more than once seek to retrace the picture of the pageant which they were assembled to behold.

"Do let us go more quickly, father; I can hear the drums," the young girl said, and in a half-teasing, half-coaxing manner she urged her companion forward.

"The troops are marching into the Tuileries," said he.

"Or marching out of it—everybody is coming away," she answered in childish vexation, which drew a smile from her father.

* Völkerschlacht: Napoleon's first defeat.

"The review only begins at half-past twelve," he said; he had fallen half behind his impetuous daughter.

It might have been supposed that she meant to hasten their progress by the movement of her right arm, for it swung like an oar-blade through the water. In her impatience she had crushed her handkerchief into a ball in her tiny, well-gloved fingers. Now and then the old man smiled, but the smiles were succeeded by an anxious look which crossed his withered face and saddened it. In his love for the fair young girl by his side, he was as fain to exalt the present moment as to dread the future. "She is happy to-day; will her happiness last?" he seemed to ask himself, for the old are somewhat prone to foresee their own sorrows in the future of the young.

Father and daughter reached the peristyle under the tower where the tricolor flag was still waving; but, as they passed under the arch by which people came and went between the gardens of the Tuileries and the Place du Carrousel, the sentries on guard called out sternly—

"No admittance this way!"

By standing on tiptoe the young girl contrived to catch a glimpse of a crowd of well-dressed women, thronging either side of the old marble arcade along which the Emperor was to pass.

"We were too late in starting, father; you can see that quite well." A little piteous pout revealed the immense importance which she attached to the sight of this particular review.

"Very well, Julie—let us go away. You dislike a crush."

"Do let us stay, father. Even here I may catch a glimpse of the Emperor; he might die during this campaign, and then I should never have seen him."

Her father shuddered at the selfish speech. There were tears in the girl's voice; he looked at her, and thought that he saw tears beneath her lowered eyelids; tears caused not so much by the disappointment as by one of the troubles of early

youth, a secret easily guessed by an old father. Suddenly Julie's face flushed, and she uttered an exclamation. Neither her father nor the sentinels understood the meaning of the cry; but an officer within the barrier, who sprang across the court toward the staircase, heard it, and turned abruptly at the sound. He went to the arcade by the gardens of the Tuileries, and recognized the young lady who had been hidden for a moment by the tall bearskin caps of the grenadiers. He set aside in favor of the pair the order which he himself had given. Then, taking no heed of the murmurings of the fashionable crowd seated under the arcade, he gently drew the enraptured child toward him.

"I am no longer surprised at her vexation and enthusiasm, if *you* are in waiting," the old man said with a half-mocking, half-serious glance at the officer.

"If you want a good position, Monsieur le Duc," the young man answered, "we must not spend any time in talking. The Emperor does not like to be kept waiting, and the grand marshal has sent me to announce our readiness."

As he spoke, he had taken Julie's arm with a certain air of old acquaintance, and drew her rapidly in the direction of the Place du Carrousel. Julie was astonished at the sight. An immense crowd was penned up in a narrow space, shut in between the gray walls of the palace and the limits marked out by chains round the great sanded squares in the midst of the courtyard of the Tuileries. The cordon of sentries posted to keep a clear passage for the Emperor and his staff had great difficulty in keeping back the eager humming swarm of human beings.

"Is it going to be a very fine sight?" Julie asked (she was radiant now).

"Pray take care!" cried her guide, and, seizing Julie by the waist, he lifted her up with as much vigor as rapidity and set her down beside a pillar.

But for his prompt action, his gazing kinswoman would

have come into collision with the hindquarters of a white horse which Napoleon's Mameluke held by the bridle; the animal in its trappings of green velvet and gold stood almost under the arcade, some ten paces behind the rest of the horses in readiness for the Emperor's staff.

The young officer placed the father and daughter in front of the crowd in the first space to the right, and recommended them by a sign to the two veteran grenadiers on either side. Then he went on his way into the palace; a look of great joy and happiness had succeeded to his horror-stricken expression when the horse backed. Julie had given his hand a mysterious pressure; had she meant to thank him for the little service he had done her, or did she tell him: "After all, I shall really see you?" She bent her head quite graciously in response to the respectful bow by which the officer took leave of them before he vanished.

The old man stood a little behind his daughter. He looked grave. He seemed to have left the two young people together for some purpose of his own, and now he furtively watched the girl, trying to lull her into false security by appearing to give his whole attention to the magnificent sight in the Place du Carrousel. When Julie's eyes turned to her father with the expression of a schoolboy before his master, he answered her glance by a gay, kindly smile, but his own keen eyes had followed the officer under the arcade, and nothing of all that passed was lost upon him.

"What a grand sight!" said Julie in a low voice, as she pressed her father's hand; and, indeed, the pomp and picturesqueness of the spectacle in the Place du Carrousel drew the same exclamation from thousands upon thousands of spectators, all agape with wonder. Another array of sightseers, as tightly packed as the ranks behind the old noble and his daughter, filled the narrow strip of pavement by the railings which crossed the Place du Carrousel from side to side in a line parallel with the Tuileries. The dense living mass, varie-

gated by the colors of the women's dresses, traced out a bold line across the centre of the Place du Carrousel, filling in the fourth side of a vast parallelogram, surrounded on three sides by the Tuileries itself. Within the precincts thus railed off stood the regiments of the Old Guard about to be passed in review, drawn up opposite the palace in imposing blue columns, ten ranks in depth. Without and beyond in the Place du Carrousel stood several regiments likewise drawn up in parallel lines, ready to march in through the arch in the centre; the Triumphal Arch, where the bronze horses of St. Mark from Venice used to stand in those days. At either end, by the Louvre Galleries, the regimental bands were stationed, masked by the Polish Lancers then on duty.

The greater part of the vast graveled space was empty as an arena, ready for the evolutions of those silent masses disposed with the symmetry of military art. The sunlight blazed back from ten thousand bayonets in thin points of flame; the breeze ruffled the men's helmet plumes till they swayed like the crests of forest trees before a gale. The mute, glittering ranks of veterans were full of bright contrasting colors, thanks to their different uniforms, weapons, accoutrements, and aiguillettes; and the whole great picture, that miniature battle-field before the combat, was framed by the majestic towering walls of the Tuileries, which officers and men seemed to rival in their immobility. Involuntarily the spectator made the comparison between the walls of men and the walls of stone. The spring sunlight, flooding white masonry reared but yesterday and buildings centuries old, shone full likewise upon thousands of bronzed faces, each one with its own tale of perils passed, each one gravely expectant of perils to come.

The colonels of the regiments came and went alone before the ranks of heroes; and behind the masses of troops, checkered with blue and silver and gold and purple, the curious could discern the tricolor pennons on the lances of some half-a-dozen indefatigable Polish cavalry, rushing about like shep-

herds' dogs in charge of a flock, caracoling up and down between the troops and the crowd, to keep the gazers within their proper bounds. But for this slight flutter of movement, the whole scene might have been taking place in the courtyard of the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. The very spring breeze, ruffling up the long fur on the grenadiers' bearskins, bore witness to the men's immobility, as the smothered murmur of the crowd emphasized their silence. Now and again the jingling of Chinese bells, or a chance blow to a big drum, woke the reverberating echoes of the Imperial Palace with a sound like the far-off rumblings of thunder.

An indescribable, unmistakable enthusiasm was manifest in the expectancy of the multitude. France was about to take farewell of Napoleon on the eve of a campaign of which the meanest citizen foresaw the perils. The existence of the French Empire was at stake—to be, or not to be. The whole citizen population seemed to be as much inspired with this thought as that other armed population standing in serried and silent ranks in the inclosed space, with the Eagles and the genius of Napoleon hovering above them.

Those very soldiers were the hope of France, her last drop of blood; and this accounted for not a little of the anxious interest of the scene. Most of the gazers in the crowd had bidden farewell—perhaps farewell for ever—to the men who made up the rank and file of the battalions; and even those most hostile to the Emperor, in their hearts, put up fervent prayers to heaven for the glory of France; and those most weary of the struggle with the rest of Europe had left their hatreds behind as they passed in under the Triumphal Arch. They, too, felt that in the hour of danger Napoleon meant France herself.

The clock of the Tuileries struck the half-hour. In a moment the hum of the crowd ceased. The silence was so deep that you might have heard a child speak. The old noble and his daughter, wholly intent, seeming to live only

by their eyes, caught a distinct sound of spurs and clank of swords echoing up under the sonorous peristyle.

And suddenly there appeared a short, somewhat stout figure in a green uniform, white trousers, and riding boots; a man wearing on his head a cocked hat well-nigh as magically potent as its wearer; the broad red ribbon of the Legion of Honor rose and fell on his breast, and a short sword hung at his side. At one and the same moment the man was seen by all eyes in all parts of the square.

Immediately the drums beat a salute, both bands struck up a martial refrain, caught and repeated like a fugue by every instrument from the thinnest flutes to the largest drum. The clangor of that call to arms thrilled through every soul. The colors dropped and the men presented arms, one unanimous rhythmical movement shaking every bayonet from the foremost front near the palace to the last rank in the Place du Carrousel. The words of command sped from line to line like echoes. The whole enthusiastic multitude sent up a shout of "Long live the Emperor!"

Everything shook, quivered, and thrilled at last. Napoleon had mounted his horse. It was his movement that had put life into those silent masses of men; the dumb instruments had found a voice at his coming, the Eagles and the colors had obeyed the same impulse which had brought emotion into all faces.

The very walls of the high galleries of the old palace seemed to cry aloud, "Long live the Emperor!"

There was something preternatural about it—it was magic at work, a counterfeit presentment of the power of God; or rather it was a fugitive image of a reign itself so fugitive though brilliant.

And HE the centre of such love, such enthusiasm and devotion, and so many prayers, he for whom the sun had driven the clouds from the sky, was sitting there on his horse, three paces in front of his Golden Squadron, with the grand marshal

on his left, and the marshal-in-waiting on his right. Amid all the outburst of enthusiasm at his presence not a feature of his face appeared to alter.

"Oh! yes. At Wagram, in the thick of the firing, on the field of Borodino, among the dead, always as cool as a cucumber HE is!" said the grenadier, in answer to the questions with which the young girl plied him. For a moment Julie was absorbed in the contemplation of that face, so quiet in the security of conscious power. The Emperor noticed Mlle. de Chatillonest, and leaned to make some brief remark to Duroc, which drew a smile from the grand marshal. Then the review began.

If hitherto the young lady's attention had been divided between Napoleon's impassive face and the blue, red, and green ranks of troops, from this time forth she was wholly intent upon a young officer moving among the lines as they performed their swift symmetrical evolutions. She watched him gallop with tireless activity to and from the group where the plainly dressed Napoleon shone conspicuous. The officer rode a splendid black horse. His handsome sky-blue uniform marked him out amid the variegated multitude as one of the Emperor's orderly staff-officers. His gold lace glittered in the sunshine which lighted up the aigrette on his tall, narrow shako, so that the gazer might have compared him to a will-o'-the wisp, or to a visible spirit emanating from the Emperor to infuse movement into those battalions whose swaying bayonets flashed into flames; for, at a mere glance from his eyes, they broke and gathered again, surging to and fro like the waves in a bay, or again swept before him like the long ridges of high-crested waves which the vexed ocean directs against the shore.

When the manœuvres were over the officer galloped back at full speed, pulled up his horse, and awaited orders. He was not ten paces from Julie as he stood before the Emperor, much as General Rapp stands in Gérard's Battle of Austerlitz.

The young girl could behold her lover in all his soldierly splendor.

Colonel Victor d'Aiglemont, barely thirty years of age, was tall, slender, and well made. His well-proportioned figure never showed to better advantage than now as he exerted his strength to hold in the restive animal, whose back seemed to curve gracefully to the rider's weight. His brown masculine face possessed the indefinable charm of perfectly regular features combined with youth. The fiery eyes under the broad forehead, shaded by thick eyebrows and long lashes, looked like white ovals bordered by an outline of black. His nose had the delicate curve of an eagle's beak; the sinuous lines of the inevitable black mustache enhanced the crimson of the lips. The brown and tawny shades which overspread the wide high-colored cheeks told a tale of unusual vigor, and his whole face bore the impress of dashing courage. He was the very model which French artists seek to-day for the typical hero of Imperial France. The horse which he rode was covered with sweat; the animal's quivering head denoted the last degree of restiveness; his hind hoofs were set down wide apart and exactly in a line; he shook his long thick tail to the wind; in his fidelity to his master he seemed to be a visible presentment of that master's devotion to the Emperor.

Julie saw her lover watching intently for the Emperor's glances, and felt a momentary pang of jealousy, for as yet he had not given her a look. Suddenly at a word from his sovereign Victor gripped his horse's flanks and set out at a gallop, but the animal took fright at a shadow cast by a post, shied, backed, and reared up so suddenly that his rider was all but thrown off. Julie cried out, her face grew white, people looked at her curiously, but she saw no one, her eyes were fixed upon the too mettlesome beast. The officer gave the horse a sharp admonitory cut with the whip, and galloped off with Napoleon's order.

Julie was so absorbed, so dizzy with sights and sounds, that

unconsciously she clung to her father's arm so tightly that he could read her thoughts by the varying pressure of her fingers. When Victor was all but flung out of the saddle, she clutched her father with a convulsive grip as if she herself were in danger of falling, and the old man looked at his daughter's tell-tale face with dark and painful anxiety. Pity, jealousy, something even of regret stole across every drawn and wrinkled line of mouth and brow. When he saw the unwonted light in Julie's eyes, when that cry broke from her, when the convulsive grasp of her fingers drew away the veil and put him in possession of her secret, then with that revelation of her love there came surely some swift revelation of the future. Mournful forebodings could be read in his own face.

Julie's soul seemed at that moment to have passed into the officer's being. A torturing thought more cruel than any previous dread contracted the old man's pain-worn features, as he saw the glance of understanding that passed between the soldier and Julie. The girl's eyes were wet, her cheeks glowed with unwonted color. Her father turned abruptly and led her away into the garden of the Tuileries.

"Why, father," she cried, "there are still the regiments in the Place du Carrousel to be passed in review."

"No, child, all the troops are marching out."

"I think you are mistaken, father; Monsieur d'Aiglemont surely told them to advance——"

"But I feel ill, my child, and I do not care to stay."

Julie could readily believe the words when she glanced at his face; he looked quite worn out by his fatherly anxieties and cares.

"Are you feeling very ill?" she asked indifferently, her mind was so full of other thoughts.

"Every day is a reprieve for me, is it not?" returned her father.

"Now do you mean to make me miserable again by talking

about your death? I was in such spirits! Do pray get rid of those horrid, gloomy ideas of yours."

The father heaved a sigh. "Ah! spoiled child," he cried, "the best hearts are sometimes very cruel. We devote our whole lives to you, you are our one thought, we plan for your welfare, sacrifice our tastes to your whims, idolize you, give the very blood in our veins for you, and all this is nothing, is it? Alas! yes, you take it all as a matter of course. If we would always have your smiles and your disdainful love, we should need the power of God in heaven. Then comes another, a lover, a husband, and steals away your heart."

Julie looked in amazement at her father; he walked slowly along, and there was no light in the eyes which he turned upon her.

"You hide yourself even from us," he continued, "but, perhaps, also you hide yourself from yourself——"

"What do you mean by that, father?"

"I think that you have secrets from me, Julie. You love," he went on quickly, as he saw the color rise to her face. "Oh! I hoped that you would stay with your old father until he died. I hoped to keep you with me, still radiant and happy, to admire you as you were but so lately. So long as I knew nothing of your future I could believe in a happy lot for you; but now I cannot possibly take away with me a hope of happiness for your life, for you love the colonel even more than the cousin. I can no longer doubt it."

"And why should I be forbidden to love him?" asked Julie, with lively curiosity in her face.

"Ah, my Julie, you would not understand me," sighed the father.

"Tell me, all the same," said Julie, with an involuntary petulant gesture.

"Very well, child, listen to me. Girls are apt to imagine noble and enchanting and totally imaginary figures in their own minds; they have fanciful extravagant ideas about men,

and sentiment, and life; and then they innocently endow somebody or other with all the perfections of their day-dreams, and put their trust in him. They fall in love with this imaginary creature in the man of their choice; and then, when it is too late to escape from their fate, behold their first idol, the illusion made fair with their fancies, turns to an odious skeleton. Julie, I would rather have you fall in love with an old man than with the colonel. Ah! if you could but see things from the standpoint of ten years hence, you would admit that my old experience was right. I know what Victor is, that gayety of his is simply animal spirits—the gayety of the barracks. He has no ability, and he is a spend-thrift. He is one of those men whom heaven created to eat and digest four meals a day, to sleep, to fall in love with the first woman that comes to hand, and to fight. He does not understand life. His kind heart, for he has a kind heart, will perhaps lead him to give his purse to a sufferer or to a comrade; *but* he is careless, he has not the delicacy of heart which makes us slaves to a woman's happiness, he is ignorant, he is selfish. There are plenty of *buts*——"

"But, father, he must surely be clever, he must have ability, or he would not be a colonel——"

"My dear, Victor will be a colonel all his life. I have seen no one who appears to me to be worthy of you," the old father added, with a kind of enthusiasm.

He paused an instant, looked at his daughter, and added, "Why, my poor Julie, you are still too young, too fragile, too delicate for the cares and rubs of married life. D'Aiglemont's relations have spoiled him, just as your mother and I have spoiled you. What hope is there that you two could agree, with two imperious wills diametrically opposed to each other? You will be either the tyrant or the victim, and either alternative means, for a wife, an equal sum of misfortune. But you are modest and sweet-natured, you would yield from the first. In short," he added, in a quivering voice, "there is a grace

of feeling in you which would never be valued, and then——" he broke off, for the tears overcame him.

"Victor will give you pain through all the girlish qualities of your young nature," he went on, after a pause. "I know what soldiers are, my Julie; I have been in the army. In a man of that kind, love very seldom gets the better of old habits, due partly to the miseries amid which soldiers live, partly to the risks they run in a life of adventure."

"Then do you mean to cross my inclinations, do you, father?" asked Julie, half in earnest, half in jest. "Am I to marry to please you and not to please myself?"

"To please me!" cried her father, with a start of surprise. "To please *me*, child? when you will not hear the voice that upbraids you so tenderly very much longer! But I have always heard children impute personal motives for the sacrifices that their parents make for them. Marry Victor, my Julie! Some day you will bitterly deplore his ineptitude, his thriftless ways, his selfishness, his lack of delicacy, his inability to understand love, and countless troubles arising through him. Then, remember, that here, under these trees, your old father's prophetic voice sounded in your ears in vain."

He said no more; he had detected a rebellious shake of the head on his daughter's part. Both made several paces toward the carriage which was waiting for them at the grating. During that interval of silence, the young girl stole a glance at her father's face, and, little by little, her sullen brow cleared. The intense pain visible on his bowed forehead made a lively impression upon her.

"Father," she began in gentle, tremulous tones, "I promise to say no more about Victor until you have overcome your prejudices against him."

The old man looked at her in amazement. Two tears which filled his eyes overflowed down his withered cheeks. He could not take Julie in his arms in that crowded place; but he pressed her hand tenderly. A few minutes later, when

they had taken their places in the cabriolet, all the anxious thought which had gathered about his brow had completely disappeared. Julie's pensive attitude gave him far less concern than the innocent joy which had betrayed her secret during the review.

Nearly a year had passed since the Emperor's last review. In early March, 1814, a calèche* was rolling along the high road from Amboise to Tours. As the carriage came out from beneath the green-roofed aisle of walnut-trees by the post-house of La Frillière, the horses dashed forward with such speed that in a moment they gained the bridge built across the Cise at the point of its confluence with the Loire. There, however, they came to a sudden stand. One of the traces had given way in consequence of the furious pace at which the post-boy, obedient to his orders, had urged on four horses, the most vigorous of their breed. Chance, therefore, gave the two recently awakened occupants of the carriage an opportunity of seeing one of the most lovely landscapes along the enchanting banks of the Loire, and that at their full leisure.

At a glance the travelers could see to the right the whole winding course of the Cise meandering like a silver snake among the meadows, where the grass had taken the deep, bright green of early spring. To the left lay the Loire in all its glory. A chill morning breeze, ruffling the surface of the stately river, had fretted the broad sheets of water far and wide into a network of ripples, which caught the gleams of the sun, so that the green islets here and there in its course shone like gems set in a gold necklace. On the opposite bank the fair rich meadows of Touraine stretched away as far as the eye could see; the low hills of the Cher, the only limits to the view, lay on the far horizon, a luminous line against the clear blue sky. Tours itself, framed by the trees on the islands in a setting of spring leaves, seemed to rise like Venice out of

* Open carriage.

the waters, and her old cathedral towers soaring in air were blended with the pale fantastic cloud shapes in the sky.

Over the side of the bridge, where the carriage had come to a stand, the traveler looks along a line of cliffs stretching as far as Tours, Nature in some freakish mood must have raised these barriers of rock, undermined incessantly by the rippling Loire at their feet, for a perpetual wonder for spectators. The village of Vouvray nestles, as it were, among the clefts and crannies of the crags, which begin to describe a bend at the junction of the Loire and Cise. A whole population of vine-dressers lives, in fact, in appalling insecurity in holes in their jagged sides for the whole way between Vouvray and Tours. In some places there are three tiers of dwellings hollowed out, one above the other, in the rock, each row communicating with the next by dizzy staircases cut likewise in the face of the cliff. A little girl in a short, red petticoat runs out into her garden on the roof of another dwelling; you can watch a wreath of hearth-smoke curling up among the shoots and trails of the vines. Men are at work in their almost perpendicular patches of ground, an old woman sits tranquilly spinning under a blossoming almond tree on a crumbling mass of rock, and smiles down on the dismay of the travelers far below her feet. The cracks in the ground trouble her as little as the precarious state of the old wall, a pendent mass of loose stones, only kept in position by the crooked stems of its ivy mantle. The sound of coopers' mallets rings through the skyey caves; for here, where Nature stints human industry of soil, the soil is everywhere tilled, and everywhere fertile.

No view along the whole course of the Loire can compare with the rich landscape of Touraine, here outspread beneath the traveler's eyes. The triple picture, thus barely sketched in outline, is one of those scenes which the imagination engraves for ever upon the memory; let a poet fall under its charm, and he shall be haunted by visions which will re-

produce its romantic loveliness out of the vague substance of dreams.

As the carriage stopped on the bridge over the Cise, white sails came out here and there from among the islands in the Loire to add new grace to the perfect view. The subtle scent of the willows by the water's edge was mingled with the damp odor of the breeze from the river. The monotonous chant of a goatherd added a plaintive note to the sound of birds' songs in a chorus which never ends; the cries of the boatmen brought tidings of distant busy life. Here was Touraine in all its glory, and the very height of the splendor of spring. Here was the one peaceful district in France in those troublous days; for it was so unlikely that a foreign army should trouble its quiet that Touraine might be said to defy invasion.

As soon as the calèche stopped, a head covered with a foraging cap was put out of the window, and soon afterward an impatient military man flung open the carriage-door and sprang down into the road to pick a quarrel with the postillion, but the skill with which the Tourangeau was repairing the trace restored Colonel d'Aiglemont's equanimity. He went back to the carriage, stretched himself to relieve his benumbed muscles, yawned, looked about him, and finally laid a hand on the arm of a young woman warmly wrapped up in a furred pelisse.

"Come, Julie," he said hoarsely, "just wake up and take a look at this country. It is magnificent."

Julie put her head out of the window. She wore a traveling cap of sable fur. Nothing could be seen of her but her face, for the whole of her person was completely concealed by the folds of her fur pelisse. The young girl who tripped to the review at the Tuileries with light footsteps and joy and gladness in her heart was scarcely recognizable in Julie d'Aiglemont. Her face, delicate as ever, had lost the rose-color which once gave it so rich a glow. A few straggling locks of black hair, straightened out by the damp night-air, en-

hanced its dead whiteness, and all its life and sparkle seemed to be torpid. Yet her eyes glittered with preternatural brightness in spite of the violet shadows under the lashes upon her wan cheeks.

She looked out with indifferent eyes over the fields toward the Cher, at the islands in the river, at the line of the crags of Vouvray stretching along the Loire toward Tours; then she sank back as soon as possible into her seat in the calèche. She did not care to give a glance to the enchanting valley of the Cise.

"Yes, it is wonderful," she said, and out in the open air her voice sounded weak and faint to the last degree. Evidently she had had her way with her father, to her misfortune.

"Would you not like to live here, Julie?"

"Yes; here or anywhere," she answered listlessly.

"Do you feel ill?" asked Colonel d'Aiglemont.

"No, not at all," she answered with momentary energy; and, smiling at her husband, she added, "I should like to go to sleep."

Suddenly there came a sound of a horse galloping toward them. Victor d'Aiglemont dropped his wife's hand and turned to watch the bend in the road. No sooner had he taken his eyes from Julie's pale face than all the assumed gayety died out of it; it was as if a light had been extinguished. She felt no wish to look at the landscape, no curiosity to see the horseman who was galloping toward them at such a furious pace, and, ensconcing herself in her corner, stared out before her at the hindquarters of the post-horses, looking as blank as any Breton peasant listening to his rector's sermon.

Suddenly a young man riding a valuable horse came out from behind the clump of poplars and flowering briar-rose.

"It is an Englishman," remarked the colonel.

"Lord bless you, yes, general," said the post-boy; "he belongs to the race of fellows who have a mind to gobble up France, they say."

The stranger was one of the foreigners traveling in France at the time when Napoleon detained all British subjects within the limits of the Empire, by way of reprisals for the violation of the Treaty of Amiens, an outrage of international law perpetrated by the court of St. James. These prisoners, compelled to submit to the Emperor's pleasure, were not all suffered to remain in the houses where they were arrested, nor yet in the places of residence which at first they were permitted to choose. Most of the English colony in Touraine had been transplanted thither from different places where their presence was supposed to be inimical to the interests of the Continental Policy.

The young man, who was taking the tedium off the early morning hours on horseback, was one of these victims of bureaucratic tyranny. Two years previously, a sudden order from the Foreign Office had dragged him from Montpellier, whither he had gone on account of consumptive tendencies. He glanced at the Comte d'Aiglemont, saw that he was a military man, and deliberately looked away, turning his head somewhat abruptly toward the meadows by the Cise.

"The English are all as insolent as if the globe belonged to them," muttered the colonel. "Luckily, Soult will give them a thrashing directly."

The prisoner gave a glance to the calèche as he rode by. Brief though that glance was, he had yet time to notice the sad expression which lent an indefinable charm to the countess' pensive face. Many men are deeply moved by the mere semblance of suffering in a woman; they take the look of pain for a sign of constancy or of love. Julie herself was so much absorbed in the contemplation of the opposite cushion that she saw neither the horse nor the rider. The damaged trace meanwhile had been quickly and strongly repaired; the count stepped into his place again; and the post-boy, doing his best to make up for lost time, drove the carriage rapidly along the embankment. On they drove under the overhang-

ing cliffs, with their picturesque vine-dressers' huts and stores of wine maturing in their dark sides, till in the distance uprose the spire of the famous abbey of Marmoutiers, the retreat of St. Martin.

"What can that diaphanous milord want with us?" exclaimed the colonel, turning to assure himself that the horseman who had followed them from the bridge was the young Englishman.

After all, the stranger committed no breach of good manners by riding along on the footway, and Colonel d'Aiglemont was fain to lie back in his corner after sending a scowl in the Englishman's direction. But in spite of his hostile instincts, he could not help noticing the beauty of the animal and the graceful horsemanship of the rider. The young man's face was of that pale, fair-complexioned, insular type, which is almost girlish in the softness and delicacy of its color and texture. He was tall, thin, and fair-haired, dressed with the extreme and elaborate neatness characteristic of a man of fashion in prudish England. Any one might have thought that bashfulness rather than pleasure at the sight of the countess had called up that flush into his face. Once only Julie raised her eyes and looked at the stranger, and then only because she was in a manner compelled to do so, for her husband called upon her to admire the action of the thoroughbred. It so happened that their glances clashed; and the shy Englishman, instead of riding abreast of the carriage, fell behind on this, and followed them at a distance of a few paces.

Yet the countess had scarcely given him a glance; she saw none of the various perfections, human and equine, commended to her notice, and fell back again in the carriage with a slight movement of the eyelids intended to express her acquiescence in her husband's views. The colonel fell asleep again, and both husband and wife reached Tours without another word. Not one of those enchanting views of ever-

changing landscape through which they sped had drawn so much as a glance from Julie's eyes.

Mme. d'Aiglemont looked now and again at her sleeping husband. While she looked, a sudden jolt shook something down upon her knees. It was her father's portrait, a miniature which she wore suspended about her neck by a black cord. At the sight of it, the tears, till then kept back, overflowed her eyes, but no one, save perhaps the Englishman, saw them glitter there for a brief moment before they dried upon her pale cheeks.

Colonel d'Aiglemont was on his way to the South. Marshal Soult was repelling an English invasion of Béarn ; and d'Aiglemont, the bearer of the Emperor's orders to the marshal, seized the opportunity of taking his wife as far as Tours to leave her with an elderly relative of his own, far away from the dangers threatening Paris.

Very shortly the carriage rolled over the paved road of Tours, over the bridge, along the Grande-Rue, and stopped at last before the old mansion of the *ci-devant* Marquise de Listomère-Landon.

The Marquise de Listomère-Landon, with her white hair, pale face, and shrewd smile, was one of those fine old ladies who still seem to wear the paniers of the eighteenth century, and affect caps of an extinct mode. They are nearly always caressing in their manner, as if the heyday of love still lingered on for these septuagenarian portraits of the age of Louis Quinze, with the faint perfume of marshal powder always clinging about them. Bigoted rather than pious, and less of bigots than they seem, women who can tell a story well and talk still better, their laughter comes more readily for an old memory than for a new jest—the present intrudes upon them.

When an old waiting-woman announced to the Marquise de Listomère-Landon (to give her the title which she was soon to resume) the arrival of a nephew whom she had not seen

since the outbreak of the war with Spain, the old lady took off her spectacles with alacrity, shut the "Galerie de l'ancienne Cour" (her favorite work), and recovered something like youthful activity, hastening out upon the flight of steps to greet the young couple there.

Aunt and niece exchanged a rapid glance of survey.

"Good-morning, dear aunt," cried the colonel, giving the old lady a hasty embrace. "I am bringing a young lady to put under your wing. I have come to put my treasure in your keeping. My Julie is neither jealous nor a coquette, she is as good as an angel. I hope that she will not be spoiled here," he added, suddenly interrupting himself.

"Scapegrace!" returned the marquise, with a satirical glance at her nephew.

She did not wait for her niece to approach her, but with a certain kindly graciousness went forward herself to kiss Julie, who stood there thoughtfully, to all appearance more embarrassed than curious concerning her new relation.

"So we are to make each other's acquaintance, are we, my love?" the marquise continued. "Do not be too much alarmed of me. I always try not to be an old woman with young people."

On the way to the drawing-room, the marquise ordered breakfast for her guests in provincial fashion; but the count checked his aunt's flow of words by saying soberly that he could only remain in the house while the horses were changing. On this the three hurried into the drawing-room. The colonel had barely time to tell the story of the political and military events which had compelled him to ask his aunt for a shelter for his young wife. While he talked on without interruption, the older lady looked from her nephew to her niece, and took the sadness in Julie's white face for grief at the enforced separation. "Eh! eh!" her looks seemed to say, "these young things are in love with each other."

The crack of the postillion's whip sounded outside in the

silent old grass-grown courtyard. Victor embraced his aunt once more and rushed out.

"Good-by, dear," he said, kissing his wife, who had followed him down to the carriage.

"Oh! Victor, let me come still farther with you," she pleaded coaxingly. "I do not want to leave you——"

"Can you seriously mean it?"

"Very well," said Julie, "since you wish it." The carriage disappeared.

"So you are very fond of my poor Victor?" said the marquise, interrogating her niece with one of those sagacious glances which dowagers give younger women.

"Alas, madame!" said Julie, "must one not love a man well indeed to marry him?"

The words were spoken with an artless accent which revealed either a pure heart or inscrutable depths. How could a woman, who had been the friend of Duclos and the Maréchal de Richelieu, refrain from trying to read the riddle of this marriage? Aunt and niece were standing on the steps, gazing after the fast-vanishing calèche. The look in the young countess' eyes did not mean love as the marquise understood it. The good lady was a Provençale, and her passions had been lively.

"So you were captivated by my good-for-nothing of a nephew?" she asked.

Involuntarily Julie shuddered, something in the experienced coquette's look and tone seemed to say that Mme. de Listomère-Landon's knowledge of her husband's character went perhaps deeper than his wife's. Mme. d'Aiglemont, in dismay, took refuge in this transparent dissimulation, ready to her hand, the first resource of an artless unhappiness. Mme. de Listomère appeared to be satisfied with Julie's answers; but in her secret heart she rejoiced to think that here was a love affair on hand to enliven her solitude, for that her niece had some amusing flirtation on foot she was fully convinced.

In the great drawing-room, hung with tapestry framed in strips of gilding, young Mme. d'Aiglemont sat before a blazing fire, behind a Chinese screen placed to shut out the cold draughts from the windows, and her heavy mood scarcely lightened. Among the old eighteenth-century furniture, under the antique paneled ceiling, it was not very easy to be gay. Yet the young Parisienne took a sort of pleasure in this entrance upon a life of complete solitude and in the solemn silence of the old provincial house. She exchanged a few words with the aunt, a stranger, to whom she had written a bride's letter on her marriage, and then sat as silent as if she had been listening to an opera. Not until two hours had been spent in an atmosphere of quiet befitting La Trappe did she suddenly awaken to a sense of uncourteous behavior, and bethink herself of the short answers which she had given her aunt. Mme. de Listomère, with the gracious tact characteristic of a bygone age, had respected her niece's mood. When Mme. d'Aiglemont became conscious of her shortcomings, the dowager sat knitting, though as a matter of fact she had several times left the room to superintend preparations in the Green Chamber, whither the countess' luggage had been transported; now, however, she had returned to her great armchair, and stole a glance from time to time at this young relative. Julie felt ashamed of giving way to irresistible broodings, and tried to earn her pardon by laughing at herself.

"My dear child, *we* know the sorrows of widowhood," returned her aunt. But only the eyes of forty years could have distinguished the irony hovering about the old lady's mouth.

Next morning the countess improved. She talked. Mme. de Listomère no longer despaired of fathoming the new-made wife, whom yesterday she had set down as a dull, unsociable creature, and discoursed on the delights of the country, of dances, of houses where they could visit. All that day the marquise's questions were so many snares; it was the old habit of

the old court, she could not help setting traps to discover her niece's character. For several days Julie, plied with temptations, steadfastly declined to seek amusement abroad; and much as the old lady's pride longed to exhibit her pretty niece, she was fain to renounce all hope of taking her into society, for the young countess was still in mourning for her father, and found in her loss and her mourning dress a pretext for her sadness and desire for seclusion.

By the end of a week the dowager admired Julie's angelic sweetness of disposition, her diffident charm, her indulgent temper, and thenceforward began to take a prodigious interest in the mysterious sadness gnawing at this young heart. The countess was one of those women who seem born to be loved and to bring happiness with them. Mme. de Listomère found her niece's society grown so sweet and precious that she doted upon Julie, and could no longer think of parting with her. A month sufficed to establish an eternal friendship between the two ladies. The dowager noticed, not without surprise, the changes that took place in Mme. d'Aiglemont; gradually her bright color died away and her face became dead white. Yet, Julie's spirits rose as the bloom faded from her cheeks. Sometimes the dowager's sallies provoked outbursts of merriment or peals of laughter, promptly repressed, however, by some clamorous thought.

Mme. de Listomère had guessed by this time that it was neither Victor's absence nor a father's death which threw a shadow over her niece's life; but her mind was so full of dark suspicions that she found it difficult to lay a finger upon the real cause of the mischief. Possibly truth is only discoverable by chance. A day came, however, at length when Julie flashed out before her aunt's astonished eyes into a complete forgetfulness of her marriage; she recovered the wild spirits of careless girlhood. Mme. de Listomère then and there made up her mind to fathom the depths of this soul, for its exceeding simplicity was as inscrutable as dissimulation.

Night was falling. The two ladies were sitting by the window which looked out upon the street, and Julie was looking thoughtful again, when some one went by on horseback.

"There goes one of your victims," said the marquise.

Mme. d'Aiglemont looked up; dismay and surprise blended in her face.

"He is a prim young Englishman, the Honorable Arthur Ormond, Lord Grenville's eldest son. His history is interesting. His physicians sent him to Montpellier in 1802; it was hoped that in that climate he might recover from the lung complaint which was gaining ground. He was detained, like all his fellow-countrymen, by Buonaparte when war broke out. That monster cannot live without fighting. The young Englishman, by way of amusing himself, took to studying his own complaint, which was believed to be incurable. By degrees he acquired a liking for anatomy and physic, and took quite a craze for that kind of thing, a most extraordinary taste in a man of quality, though the Regent certainly amused himself with chemistry! In short, Monsieur Arthur made astonishing progress in his studies; his health did the same under the faculty of Montpellier; he consoled his captivity, and at the same time his cure was thoroughly completed. They say that he spent two whole years in a cowshed, living on cresses and the milk of a cow brought from Switzerland, breathing as seldom as he could, and never speaking a word. Since he came to Tours he has lived quite alone; he is as proud as a peacock; but you have certainly made a conquest of him, for probably it is not on my account that he has ridden under the window twice every day since you have been here. He has certainly fallen in love with you."

That last phrase roused the countess like magic. Her involuntary start and smile took the marquise by surprise. So far from showing a sign of the instinctive satisfaction felt by the most strait-laced of women when she learns that she has destroyed the peace of mind of some male victim, there was a

hard, haggard expression in Julie's face—a look of repulsion amounting almost to loathing.

A woman who loves will put the whole world under the ban of Love's empire for the sake of the one whom she loves; but such a woman can laugh and jest; and Julie at that moment looked as if the memory of some recently escaped peril was too sharp and fresh not to bring with it a quick sensation of pain. Her aunt, by this time convinced that Julie did not love her nephew, was stupefied by the discovery that she loved nobody else. She shuddered lest a further discovery should show her Julie's heart disenchanted, lest the experience of a day, or perhaps of a night, should have revealed to a young wife the full extent of Victor's emptiness.

"If she has found him out, there is an end of it," thought the dowager. "My nephew will soon be made to feel the inconveniences of wedded life."

The marquise now proposed to convert Julie to the monarchical doctrines of the times of Louis Quinze; but a few hours later she discovered, or, more properly speaking, guessed, the not uncommon state of affairs, and the real cause of her niece's low spirits.

Julie turned thoughtful on a sudden, and went to her room earlier than usual. When her maid left her for the night, she still sat by the fire in the yellow velvet depths of a great chair, an old-world piece of furniture as well suited for sorrow as for happy people. Tears flowed, followed by sighs and meditation. After a while she drew a little table to her, sought writing materials, and began to write. The hours went by swiftly. Julie's confidences made to the sheet of paper seemed to cost her dear; every sentence set her dreaming, and at last she suddenly burst into tears. The clocks were striking two. Her head, grown heavy as a dying woman's, was bowed over her breast. When she raised it, her aunt appeared before her as suddenly as if she had stepped out of the background of tapestry upon the walls.

"What can be the matter with you, child?" asked the marquise. "Why are you sitting up so late? And why, in the first place, are you crying alone, at your age?"

Without further ceremony she sat down beside her niece, her eyes the while devouring the unfinished letter.

"Were you writing to your husband?"

"Do I know where he is?" returned the countess.

Her aunt thereupon took up the sheet and proceeded to read it. She had brought her spectacles; the deed was premeditated. The innocent writer of the letter allowed her to take it without the slightest remark. It was neither lack of dignity nor consciousness of secret guilt which left her thus without energy. Her aunt had come in upon her at a crisis. She was helpless; right or wrong, reticence and confidence, like all things else, were matters of indifference. Like some young maid who has heaped scorn upon her lover, and feels so lonely and sad when evening comes that she longs for him to come back or for a heart to which she can pour out her sorrow, Julie allowed her aunt to violate the seal which honor places upon an open letter, and sat musing while the marquise read on:

"MY DEAR LOUISA:—Why do you ask so often for the fulfillment of as rash a promise as two young and inexperienced girls could make? You say that you often ask yourself why I have given no answer to your questions for these six months. If my silence told you nothing, perhaps you will understand the reasons for it to-day, as you read the secrets which I am about to betray. I should have buried them for ever in the depths of my heart if you had not announced your own approaching marriage. You are about to be married, Louisa. The thought makes me shiver. Poor little one! marry, yes, and in a few months' time one of the keenest pangs of regret will be the recollection of a self which used to be, of the two young girls who sat one evening under one of the tallest oak-

trees on the hillside at Écouen, and looked along the fair valley at our feet in the light of the sunset, which caught us in its glow. We sat on a slab of rock in ecstasy, which sobered down into melancholy of the gentlest. You were the first to discover that the far-off sun spoke to us of the future. How inquisitive and how silly we were! Do you remember all the absurd things we said and did? We embraced each other; 'like lovers,' said we. We solemnly promised that the first bride should faithfully reveal to the other the mysteries of marriage, the joys which our childish minds imagined to be so delicious. That evening will complete your despair, Louisa. In those days you were young and beautiful and careless, if not radiantly happy; a few days of marriage, and you will be, what I am already—ugly, wretched, and old. Need I tell you how proud I was and how vain and glad to be married to Colonel Victor d'Aiglemont? And, beside, how could I tell you now? for I cannot remember that old self. A few moments turned my girlhood to a dream. All through the memorable day which consecrated a chain, the extent of which was hidden from me, my behavior was not free from reproach. Once and again my father tried to repress my spirits; the joy which I showed so plainly was thought unbefitting the occasion, my talk scarcely innocent, simply because I was so innocent. I played endless child's tricks with my bridal veil, my wreath, my gown. Left alone that night in the room whither I had been conducted in state, I planned a piece of mischief to tease Victor. While I awaited his coming, my heart beat wildly, as it used to do when I was a child stealing into the drawing-room on the last day of the old year to catch a glimpse of the New Year's gifts piled up there in heaps. When my husband came in and looked for me, my smothered laughter, ringing out from beneath the lace in which I had shrouded myself, was the last outburst of the delicious merriment which brightened our games in childhood——"

When the dowager had finished reading the letter, and after such a beginning the rest must have been sad indeed, she slowly laid her spectacles on the table, put the letter down beside them, and looked fixedly at her niece. Age had not dimmed the fire in those green eyes as yet.

"My little girl," she said, "a married woman cannot write such a letter as this to a young unmarried woman; it is scarcely proper——"

"So I was thinking," Julie broke in upon her aunt. "I felt ashamed of myself while you were reading it."

"If a dish at table is not to our taste, there is no occasion to disgust others with it, child," the old lady continued benignly, "especially when marriage has seemed to us all, from Eve downward, so excellent an institution. You have no mother?"

The countess trembled, then she raised her face meekly, and said—

"I have missed my mother many times already during the past year; but I have myself to blame, I would not listen to my father. He was opposed to my marriage; he disapproved of Victor as a son-in-law."

She looked at her aunt. The old face was lighted up with a kindly look, and a thrill of joy dried Julie's tears. She held out her young, soft hand to the old marquise, who seemed to ask for it, and the understanding between the two women was completed by the close grasp of their fingers.

"Poor orphan child!"

The words came like a final flash of enlightenment to Julie. It seemed to her that she heard her father's prophetic voice again.

"Your hands are burning! Are they always like this?" asked the marquise.

"The fever only left me seven or eight days ago."

"You had a fever upon you, and said nothing about it to me!"

"I have had it for a year," said Julie, with a kind of timid anxiety.

"My good little angel, then your married life hitherto has been one long time of suffering?"

Julie did not venture to reply, but an affirmative sign revealed the whole truth.

"Then you are unhappy?"

"Oh! no, no, aunt. Victor loves me, he almost idolizes me, and I adore him, he is so kind."

"Yes, you love him; but you avoid him, do you not?"

"Yes—— sometimes. He seeks me too often."

"And often when you are alone you are troubled with the fear that he may suddenly break in upon your solitude?"

"Alas! yes, aunt. But, indeed, I love him, I do assure you."

"Do you not, in your own thoughts, blame yourself because you find it impossible to share his pleasures? Do you never think at times that marriage is a heavier yoke than an illicit passion could be?"

"Oh! that is just it," she wept. "It is all a riddle to me, and can you guess it all? My faculties are benumbed, I have no ideas, I can scarcely see at all. I am weighed down by vague dread, which freezes me till I cannot feel, and keeps me in continual torpor. I have no voice with which to pity myself, no words to express my trouble. I suffer, and I am ashamed to suffer when Victor is happy at my cost."

"Babyish nonsense and rubbish, all of it!" exclaimed the aunt, and a gay smile, an after-glow of the joys of her own youth, suddenly lighted up her withered face.

"And do you too laugh!" the younger woman cried despairingly.

"It was just my own case," the marquise returned promptly. "And now that Victor has left you, you have become a girl again, recovering a tranquillity without pleasure and without pain, have you not?"

Julie opened wide eyes of bewilderment.

"In fact, my angel, you adore Victor, do you not? But still you would rather be a sister to him than a wife, and, in short, your marriage is emphatically not a success?"

"Well—no, aunt. But why do you smile?"

"Oh! you are right, poor child! There is nothing very amusing in all this. Your future would be big with more than one mishap if I had not taken you under my protection, if my old experience of life had not guessed the very innocent cause of your troubles. My nephew did not deserve his good-fortune, the blockhead! In the reign of our well-beloved Louis Quinze, a young wife in your position would very soon have punished her husband for behaving like a ruffian. The selfish creature! The men who serve under this Imperial tyrant are all of them ignorant boors. They take brutality for gallantry; they know no more of women than they know of love; and imagine that, because they go out to face death on the morrow, they may dispense to-day with all consideration and attentions for us. The time was when a man could love and die too at the proper time. My niece, I will form you. I will put an end to this unhappy divergence between you, a natural thing enough, but it would end in mutual hatred and desire for a divorce, always supposing that you did not die on the way to despair."

Julie's amazement equaled her surprise as she listened to her aunt. She was surprised by her language, dimly divining rather than appreciating the wisdom of the words she heard, and very much dismayed to find that this relative, out of a great experience, passed judgment upon Victor as her father had done, though in somewhat milder terms. Perhaps some quick prevision of the future crossed her mind; doubtless, at any rate, she felt the heavy weight of the burden which must inevitably overwhelm her, for she burst into tears and sprang to the old lady's arms. "Be my mother," she sobbed.

The aunt shed no tears. The Revolution had left old ladies

of the Monarchy but few tears to shed. Love, in bygone days, and the Terror at a later time, had familiarized them with extremes of joy and anguish in such a sort that, amid the perils of life, they preserved their dignity and coolness, a capacity for sincere but undemonstrative affection which never disturbed their well-bred self-possession, and a dignity of demeanor which a younger generation has done very ill to discard.

The dowager took Julie in her arms and kissed her on the forehead with a tenderness and pity more often found in women's ways and manner than in their hearts. Then she coaxed her niece with kind, soothing words, assured her of a happy future, lulled her with promises of love, and put her to bed as if she had not been a niece, but a daughter, a much-loved daughter whose hopes and cares she had made her own. Perhaps the old marquise had found her own youth and inexperience and beauty again in this nephew's wife. And the countess fell asleep, happy to have found a friend, nay, a mother, to whom she could tell everything freely.

Next morning, when the two women kissed each other with heartfelt kindness, and that look of intelligence which marks a real advance in friendship, a closer intimacy between two souls, they heard the sound of horsehoofs, and, turning both together, saw the young Englishman ride slowly past the window, after his wont. Apparently he had made a certain study of the life led by the two lonely women, for he never failed to ride by as they sat at breakfast, and again at dinner. His horse slackened pace of its own accord, and, for the space of time required to pass the two windows in the room, its rider turned a melancholy look upon the countess, who seldom deigned to take the slightest notice of him. Not so the marquise. Minds not necessarily little find it difficult to resist the little curiosity which fastens upon the most trifling event that enlivens provincial life; and the Englishman's mute way of expressing his timid, earnest love tickled Mme. de Listomère.

For her the periodically recurrent glance became a part of the day's routine, hailed daily with new jests. As the two women sat down to table, both of them looked out at the same moment. This time Julie's eyes met Arthur's with such a precision of sympathy that the color rose to her face. The stranger immediately urged his horse into a gallop and went.

"What is to be done, madame?" asked Julie. "People see this Englishman go past the house, and they will take it for granted that I——"

"Yes," interrupted her aunt.

"Well, then, could I not tell him to discontinue his promenades?"

"Would not that be a way of telling him that he was dangerous? You might put that notion into his head. And, beside, can you prevent a man from coming and going as he pleases? Our meals shall be served in another room to-morrow; and, when this young gentleman sees us no longer, there will be an end of making love to you through the window. There, dear child, that is how a woman of the world does."

But the measure of Julie's misfortune was to be filled. The two women had scarcely risen from table when Victor's man arrived in hot haste from Bourges with a letter for the countess from her husband. The servant had ridden by unfrequented ways.

Victor sent his wife news of the downfall of the Empire and the capitulation of Paris. He himself had gone over to the Bourbons, and all France was welcoming them back with transports of enthusiasm. He could not go so far as Tours, but he begged her to come at once to join him at Orleans, where he hoped to be in readiness with passports for her. His servant, an old soldier, would be her escort as far as Orleans; he (Victor) believed that the road was still open.

"You have not a moment to lose, madame," said the man. "The Prussians, Austrians, and English are about to effect a junction either at Blois or at Orleans."

A few hours later, Julie's preparations were made, and she started out upon her journey in an old traveling carriage lent by her aunt.

"Why should you not come with us to Paris?" she asked, as she put her arms about the marquise. "Now that the Bourbons have come back, you would be——"

"Even if there had not been this unhoped-for return, I should still have gone to Paris, my poor child, for my advice is only too necessary to both you and Victor. So I shall make all my preparations for rejoining you there."

Julie set out. She took her maid with her, and the old soldier galloped beside the carriage as escort. At nightfall, as they changed horses for the last stage before Blois, Julie grew uneasy. All the way from Amboise she had heard the sound of wheels behind them, a carriage following hers had kept at the same distance. She stood on the step and looked out to see who her traveling companions might be, and in the moonlight saw Arthur standing three paces away, gazing fixedly at the chaise which contained her. Again their eyes met. The countess hastily flung herself back in her seat, but a feeling of dread set her pulses throbbing. It seemed to her, as to most innocent and inexperienced young wives, that she was herself to blame for this love which she had all unwittingly inspired. With this thought came an instinctive terror, perhaps a sense of her own helplessness before aggressive audacity. One of a man's strongest weapons is the terrible power of compelling a woman to think of him when her naturally lively imagination takes alarm or offense at the thought that she is followed.

The countess bethought herself of her aunt's advice, and made up her mind that she would not stir from her place during the rest of the journey; but every time the horses were changed she heard the Englishman pacing round the two carriages, and again upon the road heard the importunate sound of the wheels of his calèche. Julie soon began to think that,

when once reunited to her husband, Victor would know how to defend her against this singular persecution.

"Yet suppose that, in spite of everything, this young man does not love me?" This was the thought that came last of all.

No sooner did she reach Orleans than the Prussians stopped the chaise. It was wheeled into an innyard and put under a guard of soldiers. Resistance was out of the question. The foreign soldiers made the three travelers understand by signs that they were obeying orders, and that no one could be allowed to leave the carriage. For about two hours the countess sat in tears, a prisoner surrounded by the guard, who smoked, laughed, and occasionally stared at her with insolent curiosity. At last, however, she saw her captors fall away from the carriage with a sort of respect, and heard at the same time the sound of horses entering the yard. Another moment, and a little group of foreign officers, with an Austrian general at their head, gathered about the door of the traveling carriage.

"Madame," said the general, "pray accept our apologies. A mistake has been made. You may continue your journey withour fear; and here is a passport which will spare you all further annoyance of any kind."

Tremblingly the countess took the paper and faltered out some vague words of thanks. She saw Arthur, now wearing an English uniform, standing beside the general, and could not doubt that this prompt deliverance was due to him. The young Englishman himself looked half-glad, half-melancholy; his face was turned away, and he only dared to steal an occasional glance at Julie's face.

Thanks to the passport, Mme. d'Aiglemont reached Paris without further misadventure, and there she found her husband. Victor d'Aiglemont, released from his oath of allegiance to the Emperor, had met with a most flattering reception from the Comte d'Artois, recently appointed lieutenant-general

of the kingdom by his brother, Louis XVIII. D'Aiglemont received a commission in the Life Guards, equivalent to the rank of general. But, amid the rejoicings over the return of the Bourbons, fate dealt poor Julie a terrible blow. The death of the Marquise de Listomère-Landon was an irreparable loss. The old lady died of joy and of an accession of gout to the heart when the Duc d'Angoulême came back to Tours, and the one living being entitled by her age to enlighten Victor, the woman who, by discreet counsels, might have brought about perfect unanimity of husband and wife, was dead; and Julie felt the full extent of her loss. Henceforward she must stand alone between herself and her husband. But she was young and timid; there could be no doubt of the result, or that from the first she would elect to bear her lot in silence. The very perfection of her character forbade her to venture to swerve from her duties or to attempt to inquire into the cause of her sufferings, for to put an end to them would have been to venture on delicate ground, and Julie's girlish modesty shrank from the thought.

A word as to M. d'Aiglemont's destinies under the Restoration.

How many men are there whose utter incapacity is a secret kept from most of their acquaintance. For such as these high rank, high office, illustrious birth, a certain veneer of politeness, and considerable reserve of manner, or the prestige of great fortunes, are but so many sentinels to turn back critics who would penetrate to the presence of the real man. Such men are like kings, in that their real figure, character, and life can never be known nor justly appreciated, because they are always seen from too near or too far. Factitious merit has a way of asking questions and saying little; and understands the art of putting others forward to save the necessity of posing before them; then, with a happy knack of its own, it draws and attaches others by the thread of the ruling passion or self-interest, keeping men of far greater abilities in play

like puppets, and despising those whom it has brought down to its own level. The petty fixed idea naturally prevails; it has the advantage of persistence over the plasticity of great thoughts.

The observer who should seek to estimate and appraise the negative values of these empty heads needs subtlety rather than superior wit for the task; patience is a more necessary part of his judicial outfit than great mental grasp, cunning and tact rather than any elevation or greatness of ideas. Yet skillfully as such usurpers can cover and defend their weak points, it is difficult to delude wife and mother and children and the house-friend of the family; fortunately for them, however, these persons almost always keep a secret which in a manner touches the honor of all, and not unfrequently go so far as to help to foist the imposture upon the public. And if, thanks to such domestic conspiracy, many a noodle passes current for a man of ability, on the other hand many another who has real ability is taken for a noodle to redress the balance, and the total average of this kind of false coin in circulation in the state is a pretty constant quantity.

Bethink yourself now of the part to be played by a clever woman quick to think and feel, mated with a husband of this kind, and can you not see a vision of lives full of sorrow and self-sacrifice? Nothing upon earth can repay such hearts so full of love and tender tact. Put a strong-willed woman in this wretched situation, and she will force a way out of it for herself by a crime, like Catherine II., whom men nevertheless style "the Great." But these women are not all seated upon thrones, they are for the most part doomed to domestic unhappiness none the less terrible because obscure.

Those who seek consolation in this present world for their woes often effect nothing but a change of ills if they remain faithful to their duties; or they commit a sin if they break the laws for their pleasure. All these reflections are applicable to Julie's domestic life.

Before the fall of Napoleon nobody was jealous of d'Aiglemont. He was one colonel among many, an efficient orderly staff-officer, as good a man as you could find for a dangerous mission, as unfit as well could be for an important command. D'Aiglemont was looked upon as a dashing soldier such as the Emperor liked, the kind of man whom his mess usually calls "a good fellow." The Restoration gave him back his title of marquis, and did not find him ungrateful; he followed the Bourbons into exile at Ghent, a piece of logical loyalty which falsified the horoscope drawn for him by his late father-in-law, who predicted that Victor would remain a colonel all his life. After the Hundred Days he received the appointment of lieutenant-general, and for the second time became a marquis; but it was M. d'Aiglemont's ambition to be a peer of France. He adopted, therefore, the maxims and the politics of the "Conservateur," cloaked himself in dissimulation which hid nothing (there being nothing to hide), cultivated gravity of countenance and the art of asking questions and saying little, and was taken for a man of profound wisdom. Nothing drew him from his intrenchments behind the forms of politeness; he laid in a provision of formulas, and made lavish use of his stock of the catchwords coined at need in Paris to give fools the small change for the ore of great ideas and events. Among men of the world he was reputed a man of taste and discernment; and as a bigoted upholder of aristocratic opinions he was held up for a noble character. If by chance he slipped now and again into his old light-heartedness or levity, others were ready to discover an undercurrent of diplomatic intention beneath his inanity and silliness. "Oh! he only says exactly as much as he means to say," thought these excellent people.

So d'Aiglemont's defects and good qualities stood him alike in good stead. He did nothing to forfeit a high military reputation gained by his dashing courage, for he had never been a commander-in-chief. Great thoughts surely were en-

graven upon that manly aristocratic countenance, which imposed upon every one but his own wife. And when everybody else believed in the Marquis d'Aiglemont's imaginary talents, the marquis persuaded himself before he had done that he was one of the most remarkable men at court, where, thanks to his purely external qualifications, he was in favor and taken at his own valuation.

At home, however, M. d'Aiglemont was modest. Instinctively he felt that his wife, young though she was, was his superior; and out of this involuntary respect there grew an occult power which the marquise was obliged to wield in spite of all her efforts to shake off the burden. She became her husband's adviser, the director of his actions and his fortunes. It was an unnatural position; she felt it as something of a humiliation, a source of pain to be buried in the depths of her heart. From the first her delicately feminine instinct told her that it is a far better thing to obey a man of talent than to lead a fool; and that a young wife compelled to act and think like a man is neither man nor woman, but a being who lays aside all the charms of her womanhood along with its misfortunes, yet acquires none of the privileges which our laws give to the stronger sex. Beneath the surface her life was a bitter mockery. Was she not compelled to protect her protector, to worship a hollow idol, a poor creature who flung her the love of a selfish husband as the wages of her continual self-sacrifice; who saw nothing in her but the woman; and who either did not think it worth while, or (wrong quite as deep) did not think at all of troubling himself about her pleasures, of inquiring into the cause of her low spirits and dwindling health? And the marquis, like most men who chafe under a wife's superiority, saved his self-love by arguing from Julie's physical feebleness a corresponding lack of mental power, for which he was pleased to pity her; and he would cry out upon fate which had given him a sickly girl for a wife. The executioner posed, in fact, as the victim.

All the burdens of this dreary lot fell upon the marquise, who still must smile upon her foolish lord, and deck a house of mourning with flowers, and make a parade of happiness in a countenance wan with secret torture. And with this sense of responsibility for the honor of both, with the magnificent immolation of self, the young marquise unconsciously acquired a wifely dignity, a consciousness of virtue which became her safeguard amid many dangers.

Perhaps, if her heart were sounded to the very depths, this intimate closely hidden wretchedness, following upon her unthinking girlish first-love, had aroused in her an abhorrence of passion; possibly she had no conception of its rapture, nor of forbidden but frenzied bliss for which some women will renounce all the laws of prudence and the principles of conduct upon which society is based. She put from her like a dream the thought of bliss and tender harmony of love promised by Mme. de Listomère-Landon's mature experience, and waited resignedly for the end of her troubles with a hope that she might die young.

Her health had declined daily since her return from Touraine; her life seemed to be measured to her in suffering; yet her ill-health was graceful, her malady seemed little more than languor, and might well be taken by careless eyes for a fine lady's whim of invalidism.

Her doctors had condemned her to keep to the sofa, and there among her flowers lay the marquise, fading as they faded. She was not strong enough to walk, nor to bear the open air, and only went out in a closed carriage. Yet with all the marvels of modern luxury and invention about her, she looked more like an indolent queen than an invalid. A few of her friends, half in love perhaps with her sad plight and her fragile look, sure of finding her at home, and speculating no doubt upon her future restoration to health, would come to bring her the news of the day, and keep her informed of the thousand and one small events which fill life in Paris with variety.

Her melancholy, deep and real though it was, was still the melancholy of a woman rich in many ways. The Marquise d'Aiglemont was like some bright flower, with a dark insect gnawing at its root.

Occasionally she went into society, not to please herself, but in obedience to the exigencies of the position which her husband aspired to take. In society her beautiful voice and the perfection of her singing could always gain the social success so gratifying to a young woman; but what was social success to her, who drew nothing from it for her heart or her hopes? Her husband did not care for music. And, moreover, she seldom felt at her ease in salons, where her beauty attracted homage not wholly disinterested. Her position excited a sort of cruel compassion, a morbid curiosity. She was suffering from an inflammatory complaint not infrequently fatal, for which our nosology as yet has found no name, a complaint spoken of among women in confidential whispers. In spite of the silence in which her life was spent, the cause of her ill-health was no secret. She was still but a girl in spite of her marriage; the slightest glance threw her into confusion. In her endeavor not to blush, she was always laughing, always apparently in high spirits; she would never admit that she was not perfectly well, and anticipated questions as to her health by shame-stricken subterfuges.

In 1817, however, an event took place which did much to alleviate Julie's hitherto deplorable existence. A daughter was born to her, and she determined to nurse her child herself. For two years motherhood, its all-absorbing multiplicity of cares and anxious joys, made life less hard for her. She and her husband lived necessarily apart. Her physicians predicted improved health, but the marquise herself put no faith in these auguries based on theory. Perhaps, like many a one for whom life has lost its sweetness, she looked forward to death as a happy termination of the drama.

But with the beginning of the year 1819 life grew harder

than ever. Even while she congratulated herself upon the negative happiness which she had contrived to win, she caught a terrifying glimpse of yawning depths below it. She had passed by degrees out of her husband's life. Her fine tact and her prudence told her that misfortune must come, and that not singly, of this cooling of an affection already lukewarm and wholly selfish. Sure though she was of her ascendency over Victor, and certain as she felt of his unalterable esteem, she dreaded the influence of unbridled passions upon a head so empty, so full of rash self-conceit.

Julie's friends often found her absorbed in prolonged musings; the less clairvoyant among them would jestingly ask her what she was thinking about, as if a young wife would think of nothing but frivolity, as if there were not almost always a depth of seriousness in a mother's thoughts. Unhappiness, like great happiness, induces dreaming. Sometimes as Julie played with her little Helene, she would gaze darkly at her, giving no reply to the childish questions in which a mother delights, questioning the present and the future as to the destiny of this little one. Then some sudden recollection would bring back the scene of the review at the Tuileries and fill her eyes with tears. Her father's prophetic warnings rang in her ears, and conscience reproached her that she had not recognized its wisdom. Her troubles had all come of her own wayward folly, and often she knew not which among so many was the hardest to bear. The sweet treasures of her soul were unheeded, and not only so, she could never succeed in making her husband understand her, even in the commonest everyday things. Just as the power to love developed and grew strong and active, a legitimate channel for the affections of her nature was denied her, and wedded love was extinguished in grave physical and mental sufferings. Add to this that she now felt for her husband that pity closely bordering upon contempt, which withers all affection at last. Even if she had not learned from conversations with some of her friends. from

examples in life, from sundry occurrences in the great world, that love can bring ineffable bliss, her own wounds would have taught her to divine the pure and deep happiness which binds two kindred souls each to each.

In the picture which her memory traced of the past, Arthur's frank face stood out daily nobler and purer; it was but a flash, for upon that recollection she dared not dwell. The young Englishman's shy, silent love for her was the one event since her marriage which had left a lingering sweetness in her darkened and lonely heart. It may be that all the blighted hopes, all the frustrated longings which gradually clouded Julie's mind, gathered, by a not unnatural trick of imagination, about this man—whose very manners, sentiments, and character seemed to have so much in common with her own. This idea still presented itself to her mind fitfully and vaguely, like a dream; yet from that dream, which always ended in a sigh, Julie awoke to greater wretchedness, to keener consciousness of the latent anguish brooding beneath her imaginary bliss.

Occasionally her self-pity took wilder and more daring flights. She determined to have happiness at any cost; but still more often she lay a helpless victim of an indescribable numbing stupor, the words she heard had no meaning to her, or the thoughts which arose in her mind were so vague and indistinct that she could not find language to express them. Balked of the wishes of her heart, realities jarred harshly upon her girlish dreams of life, but she was obliged to devour her tears. To whom could she make complaint? Of whom be understood? She possessed, moreover, that highest degree of woman's sensitive pride, the exquisite delicacy of feeling which silences useless complainings and declines to use an advantage to gain a triumph which can only humiliate both victor and vanquished.

Julie tried to endow M. d'Aiglemont with her own abilities and virtues, flattering herself that thus she might enjoy the

happiness lacking in her lot. All her woman's ingenuity and tact was employed in making the best of the situation; pure waste of pains unsuspected by him, whom she thus strengthened in his despotism. There were moments when misery became an intoxication, expelling all ideas, all self-control; but, fortunately, sincere piety always brought her back to one supreme hope; she found a refuge in the belief in a future life, a wonderful thought which enabled her to take up her painful task afresh. No elation of victory followed those terrible inward battles and throes of anguish; no one knew of those long hours of sadness; her haggard glances met no response from human eyes, and during the brief moments snatched by chance for weeping, her bitter tears fell unheeded and in solitude.

One evening in January, 1820, the marquise became aware of the full gravity of a crisis, gradually brought on by force of circumstances. When a husband and wife know each other thoroughly, and their relation has long been a matter of use and wont, when the wife has learned to interpret every slightest sign, when her quick insight discerns thoughts and facts which her husband keeps from her, a chance word, or a remark so carelessly let fall in the first instance, seems, upon subsequent reflection, like the swift breaking out of light. A wife not seldom suddenly awakes upon the brink of a precipice or in the depths of the abyss; and thus it was with the marquise. She was feeling glad to have been left to herself for some days, when the real reason of her solitude flashed upon her. Her husband, whether fickle and tired of her or generous and full of pity for her, was hers no longer.

In the moment of that discovery she forgot herself, her sacrifices, all that she had passed through, she remembered only that she was a mother. Looking forward, she thought of her daughter's fortune, of the future welfare of the one creature through whom some gleams of happiness came to her, of her Helene, the only possession which bound her to life.

Then Julie wished to live to save her child from a step-mother's terrible thralldom, which might crush her darling's life. Upon this new vision of threatened possibilities followed one of those paroxysms of thought at fever-heat which consume whole years of life.

Henceforward husband and wife were doomed to be separated by a whole world of thought, and all the weight of that world she must bear alone. Hitherto she had felt sure that Victor loved her, in so far as he could be said to love; she had been the slave of his pleasures which she did not share; to-day the satisfaction of knowing that she purchased his contentment with her tears was hers no longer. She was alone in the world, nothing was left to her now but a choice of evils. In the calm stillness of the night her despondency drained her of all her strength. She rose from her sofa beside the dying fire and stood in the lamplight gazing, dry-eyed, at her child, when M. d'Aiglemont came in. He was in high spirits. Julie called to him to admire Helene as she lay asleep, but he met his wife's enthusiasm with a commonplace—

"All children are nice at that age."

He closed the curtain about the cot after a careless kiss on the child's forehead. Then he turned his eyes on Julie, took her hand and drew her to sit beside him on the sofa, where she had been sitting with such dark thoughts surging up in her mind.

"You are looking very handsome to-night, Mme. d'Aiglemont," he exclaimed, with the gayety intolerable to the marquise, who knew its emptiness so well.

"Where have you spent the evening?" she asked, with a pretense of complete indifference.

"At Madame de Sérizy's."

He had taken up a fire-screen and was looking intently at the gauze. He had not noticed the traces of tears on his wife's face. Julie shuddered. Words could not express the

overflowing torrent of thoughts which must be forced down into inner depths.

"Madame de Sérizy is giving a concert on Monday, and is dying for you to go. You have not been anywhere for some time past, and that is enough to set her longing to see you at her house. She is a good-natured woman, and very fond of you. I should be glad if you would go; I all but promised that you should——"

"I will go."

There was something so penetrating, so significant in the tones of Julie's voice, in her accent, in the glance that went with the words, that Victor, startled out of his indifference, stared at his wife in astonishment.

That was all. Julie had guessed that it was Mme. de Sérizy who had stolen her husband's heart from her. Her brooding despair benumbed her. She appeared to be deeply interested in the fire. Victor meanwhile still played with the fire-screen. He looked bored, like a man who has enjoyed himself elsewhere, and brought home the consequent lassitude. He yawned once or twice, then he took up a candle in one hand, and with the other languidly sought his wife's neck for the usual embrace; but Julie stooped and received the good-night kiss upon her forehead; the formal, loveless grimace seemed hateful to her at that moment.

As soon as the door closed upon Victor, his wife sank into a seat. Her limbs tottered beneath her, she burst into tears. None but those who have endured the torture of some such scene can fully understand the anguish that it means or divine the horror of the long-drawn tragedy arising out of it.

Those simple, foolish words, the silence that followed between the husband and wife, the marquis' gesture and expression, the way in which he sat before the fire, his attitude as he made that futile attempt to put a kiss on his wife's throat, all these things made up a dark hour for Julie, and the catastrophe of the drama of her sad and lonely life. In her mad-

ness she knelt down before the sofa, burying her face in it to shut out everything from sight, and prayed to heaven, putting a new significance into the words of the evening prayer, till it became a cry from the depths of her own soul, which would have gone to her husband's heart if he had heard it.

The following week she spent in deep thought for her future, utterly overwhelmed by this new trouble. She made a study of it, trying to discover a way to regain her ascendency over the marquis, scheming how to live long enough to watch over her daughter's happiness, yet to live true to her own heart. Then she made up her mind. She would struggle with her rival. She would shine once more in society. She would feign the love which she could no longer feel, she would captivate her husband's fancy; and, when she had lured him into her power, she would coquet with him like a capricious mistress who takes delight in tormenting a lover. This hateful strategy was the only possible way out of her troubles. In this way she would become mistress of the situation; she would prescribe her own sufferings at her good pleasure, and reduce them by enslaving her husband and bringing him under a tyrannous yoke. She felt not the slightest remorse for the hard life which he should lead. At a bound she reached cold, calculating indifference—for her daughter's sake. She had gained a sudden insight into the treacherous, lying arts of degraded women; the wiles of coquetry, the revolting cunning which arouses such profound hatred in men at the mere suspicion of innate corruption in a woman.

Julie's feminine vanity, her interests, and a vague desire to inflict punishment, all wrought unconsciously with the mother's love within her to force her into a path where new sufferings awaited her. But her nature was too noble, her mind too fastidious, and, above all things, too open, to be the accomplice of these frauds for very long. Accustomed as she was to self-scrutiny, at the first step in vice—for vice it was—the cry of conscience must inevitably drown the clamor

of the passions and of selfishness. Indeed, in a young wife whose heart is still pure, whose love has never been mated, the very sentiment of motherhood is overpowered by modesty. Modesty; is not all womanhood summed up in that? But just now Julie would not see any danger, anything wrong, in her new life.

She went to Mme. de Sérizy's concert. Her rival had expected to see a pallid, drooping woman. The marquise wore rouge, and appeared in all the splendor of a toilet which enhanced her beauty.

Mme. de Sérizy was one of those women who claim to exercise a sort of sway over fashions and society in Paris; she issued her decrees, saw them received in her own circle, and it seemed to her that all the world obeyed them. She aspired to epigram, she set up for an authority in matters of taste. Literature, politics, men and women, all alike were submitted to her censorship, and the lady herself appeared to defy the censorship of others. Her house was in every respect a model of good taste.

Julie triumphed over the countess in her own salon, filled as it was with beautiful women and women of fashion. Julie's liveliness and sparkling wit gathered all the most distinguished men in the rooms about her. Her costume was faultless, to the despair of the women, who one and all envied her the fashion of her dress, and attributed the moulded outline of her bodice to the genius of some unknown dressmaker, for women would rather believe in miracles worked by the science of chiffons than in the grace and perfection of the form beneath.

When Julie went to the piano to sing Desdemona's song, the men in the rooms flocked about her to hear the celebrated voice so long mute, and there was a deep silence. The marquise saw the heads clustered thickly in the doorways, saw all eyes turned upon her, and a sharp thrill of excitement quivered through her. She looked for her husband, gave him a coquet-

tish side-glance, and it pleased her to see that his vanity was gratified to no small degree. In the joy of triumph she sang the first part of "Al piu salice." Her audience was enraptured. Never had Malibran or Pasta sung with expression and intonation so perfect. But at the beginning of the second part she glanced over the listening groups and saw—Arthur. He never took his eyes from her face. A quick shudder thrilled through her, and her voice faltered. Up hurried Mme. de Sérizy from her place.

"What is it, dear? Oh! poor little thing! she is in such weak health; I was so afraid when I saw her begin a piece so far beyond her strength."

The song was interrupted. Julie was vexed. She had not courage to sing any longer, and submitted to her rival's treacherous sympathy. There was a whisper among the women. The incident led to discussions; they guessed that the struggle had begun between the marquise and Mme. de Sérizy, and their tongues did not spare the latter.

Julie's strange, perturbing presentiments were suddenly realized. Through her preoccupation with Arthur she had loved to imagine that with that gentle, refined face he must remain faithful to his first-love. There were times when she felt proud that this ideal, pure, and passionate young love should have been hers; the passion of the young lover whose thoughts are all for her to whom he dedicates every moment of his life, who blushes as a woman blushes, thinks as a woman might think, forgetting ambition, fame, and fortune in devotion to his love—she need never fear a rival. All these things she had fondly and idly dreamed of Arthur; now all at once it seemed to her that her dream had come true. In the young Englishman's half-feminine face she read the same deep thoughts, the same pensive melancholy, the same passive acquiescence in a painful lot, and an endurance like her own. She saw herself in him. Trouble and sadness are the most eloquent of love's interpreters, and response is marvelously

swift between two suffering creatures, for in them the powers of intuition and of assimilation of facts and ideas are well-nigh unerring and perfect. So with the violence of the shock the marquise's eyes were opened to the whole extent of the future danger. She was only too glad to find a pretext for her nervousness in her chronic ill-health, and willingly submitted to be overwhelmed by Mme. de Sérizy's insidious compassion.

That incident of the song caused talk and discussion which differed with the various groups. Some pitied Julie's fate, and regretted that such a remarkable woman was lost to society; others fell to wondering what the cause of her ill-health and seclusion could be.

"Well, now, my dear Ronquerolles," said the marquis, addressing Mme. de Sérizy's brother, "you used to envy me my good-fortune, and you used to blame me for my infidelities. Pshaw, you would not find much to envy in my lot if, like me, you had a pretty wife so fragile that for the past two years you might not so much as kiss her hand for fear of damaging her. Do not you encumber yourself with one of these fragile ornaments, only fit to put in a glass case, so brittle and so costly that you are always obliged to be careful of them. They tell me that you are afraid of snow or wet for that fine horse of yours; how often do you ride him? That is just my own case. It is true that my wife gives me no ground for jealousy, but my marriage is a purely ornamental business; if you think that I am a married man, you are grossly mistaken. So there is some excuse for my unfaithfulness. I should dearly like to know what you gentlemen who laugh at me would do in my place. Not many men would be so considerate as I am. I am sure" (here he lowered his voice) "that Mme. d'Aiglemont suspects nothing. And then, of course, I have no right to complain at all; I am very well off. Only there is nothing more trying for a man who feels things

than the sight of suffering in a poor creature to whom you are attached——"

"You must have a very sensitive nature, then," said M. de Ronquerolles, "for you are not often at home."

Laughter followed on the friendly epigram; but Arthur, who made one of the group, maintained a frigid imperturbability in his quality of an English gentleman who takes gravity for the very basis of his being. D'Aiglemont's eccentric confidence, no doubt, had kindled some kind of hope in Arthur, for he stood patiently awaiting an opportunity of a word with the marquis. He had not long to wait.

"My lord marquis," he said, "I am unspeakably pained to see the state of Madame d'Aiglemont's health. I do not think that you would talk jestingly about it if you knew that unless she adopts a certain course of treatment she must die miserably. If I use this language to you, it is because I am in a manner justified in using it, for I am quite certain that I can save Madame d'Aiglemont's life and restore her to health and happiness. It is odd, no doubt, that a man of my rank should be a physician, yet nevertheless chance determined that I should study medicine. I find life dull enough here," he continued, affecting a cold selfishness to gain his ends; "it makes no difference to me whether I spend my time and travel for the benefit of a suffering fellow-creature or waste it in Paris on some nonsense or other. It is very, very seldom that a cure is completed in these complaints, for they require constant care, time, and patience, and, above all things, money. Travel is needed, and a punctilious following out of prescriptions, by no means unpleasant, and varied daily. Two *gentlemen*" (laying a stress on the word in its English sense) "can understand each other. I give you warning that, if you accept my proposal, you shall be a judge of my conduct at every moment. I will do nothing without consulting you, without your superintendence, and I will answer for the success of my method if you will consent to follow it. Yes,

unless you wish to be Madame d'Aiglemont's husband no longer, and that before long," he added in the marquis' ear.

The marquis laughed. "One thing is certain—that only an Englishman could make me such an extraordinary proposal," he said. "Permit me to leave it unaccepted and unrejected. I will think it over; and my wife must be consulted first in any case."

Julie had returned to the piano. This time she sang a song from "Semiramide: Son regina, son guerriera,"* and the whole room applauded, a stifled outburst of well-bred acclamation which proved that the Faubourg Saint-Germain had been roused to enthusiasm by her singing.

The evening was over. D'Aiglemont brought his wife home, and Julie saw with uneasy satisfaction that her first attempt had been at once successful. Her husband had been roused out of indifference by the part which she had played, and now he meant to honor her with such a passing fancy as he might bestow upon some opera nymph. It amused Julie that she, a virtuous married woman, should be treated thus. She tried to play with her power, but at the outset her kindness broke down once more, and she received the most terrible of all the lessons held in store for her by fate.

Between two and three o'clock in the morning Julie sat up, sombre and moody, beside her sleeping husband, in the room dimly lighted by the flickering lamp. Deep silence prevailed. Her agony of remorse had lasted near an hour; how bitter her tears had been none perhaps can realize save women who have known such an experience as hers. Only such natures as Julie's can feel her loathing for a calculated caress, the horror of a loveless kiss, of the heart's apostasy, followed by dolorous prostitution. She despised herself; she cursed marriage. She could have longed for death; perhaps if it had not been for a cry from her child, she would have sprung from the window and dashed herself upon the pavement. M. d'Aigle-

* His queen, his warrior.

mont slept on peacefully at her side; his wife's hot dropping tears did not waken him.

But next morning Julie could be gay. She made a great effort to look happy, to hide, not her melancholy as heretofore, but an insuperable loathing. From that day she no longer regarded herself as a blameless wife. Had she not been false to herself? Why should she not play a double part in the future, and display astounding depths of cunning in deceiving her husband? In her there lay a hitherto undiscovered latent depravity, lacking only opportunity, and her marriage was the cause.

Even now she had asked herself why she should struggle with love, when, with her heart and her whole nature in revolt, she gave herself to the husband whom she loved no longer. Perhaps, who knows? some piece of fallacious reasoning, some bit of special pleading, lies at the root of all sins, of all crimes. How shall society exist unless every individual of which it is composed will make the necessary sacrifices of inclination demanded by its laws? If you accept the benefits of civilized society, do you not by implication engage to observe the conditions, the conditions of its very existence? And yet, starving wretches, compelled to respect the laws of property, are not less to be pitied than women whose natural instincts and sensitiveness are turned to so many avenues of pain.

A few days after that scene of which the secret lay buried in the midnight couch, d'Aiglemont introduced Lord Grenville. Julie gave the guest a stiffly polite reception, which did credit to her powers of dissimulation. Resolutely she silenced her heart, veiled her eyes, steadied her voice, and so kept her future in her own hands. Then, when by these devices, this innate womancraft, as it may be called, she had discovered the full extent of the love which she inspired, Mme. d'Aiglemont welcomed the hope of a speedy cure, and no longer opposed her husband, who pressed her to accept the young

doctor's offer. Yet she declined to trust herself with Lord Grenville until, after some further study of his words and manner, she could feel certain that he had sufficient generosity to endure his pain in silence. She had absolute power over him, and she had begun to abuse that power already. Was she not a woman?

Montcontour is an old manor-house built upon the sandy cliffs above the Loire, not far from the bridge where Julie's journey was interrupted in 1814. It is a picturesque, white hall, with turrets covered with fine stone carving like Mechlin lace; a mansion such as you often see in Touraine, spick and span, ivy-clad, standing among its groves of mulberry-trees and vineyards, with its hollow walks, its stone balustrades, and cellars mined in the rock escarpments mirrored in the Loire. The roofs of Montcontour gleam in the sun; the whole land glows in the burning heat. Traces of the romantic charm of Spain and the south hover about the enchanting spot. The breeze brings the scent of bell-flowers and golden-broom, the air is soft; all about you lies a sunny land, a land which casts its dreamy spell over your soul, a land of languor and of soft desire, a fair, sweet-scented country, where pain is lulled to sleep and passion wakes. No heart is cold for long beneath its clear sky, beside its sparkling waters. One ambition dies after another, and you sink into a serene content and repose, as the sun sinks at the end of the day swathed about with purple and azure.

One warm August evening in 1821 two people were climbing the paths cut in the crags above the hall, doubtless for the sake of the view from the heights above. The two were Julie and Lord Grenville, but this Julie seemed to be a new creature. The unmistakable color of health glowed in her face. Overflowing vitality had brought a light into her eyes, which sparkled through a moist film with that liquid brightness

which gives such irresistible charm to the eyes of children. She was radiant with smiles; she felt the joy of living and all the possibilities of life. From the very way in which she lifted her little feet, it was easy to see that no suffering trammeled her lightest movements; there was no heaviness nor languor in her eyes, her voice, as heretofore. Under the white silk sunshade which screened her from the hot sunlight, she looked like some young bride beneath her veil, or a maiden waiting to yield to the magical enchantments of Love.

Arthur led her with a lover's care, helping her up the pathway as if she had been a child, finding the smoothest ways, avoiding the stones for her, bidding her see glimpses of distance, or some flower beside the path, always with the unfailing goodness, the same delicate design in all that he did, the intuitive sense of this woman's well-being seemed to be innate in him, and as much, nay, perhaps more, a part of his being as the pulse of his own life.

The patient and her doctor went step for step. There was nothing strange for them in a sympathy which seemed to have existed since the day when first they walked together. One will swayed them both; they stopped as their senses received the same impression; every word and every glance told of the same thought in either mind. They had climbed up through the vineyards, and now they turned to sit on one of the long white stones, quarried out of the caves in the hillside; but Julie stood awhile gazing out over the landscape.

"What a beautiful country!" she cried. "Let us put up a tent and live here. Victor, Victor, do come up here!"

M. d'Aiglemont answered by a halloo from below. He did not, however, hurry himself, merely giving his wife a glance from time to time when the windings of the path gave him a glimpse of her. Julie breathed the air with delight. She looked up at Arthur, giving him one of those subtle glances in which a clever woman can put the whole of her thought.

"Ah, I should like to live here always," she said. "Would it be possible to tire of this beautiful valley? What is the picturesque river called, do you know?"

"That is the Cise."

"The Cise," she repeated. "And all this country below, before us?"

"Those are the low hills above the Cher."*

"And away to the right? Ah, that is Tours. Only see how fine the cathedral towers look in the distance."

She was silent, and let fall the hand which she had stretched out toward the view upon Arthur's. Both admired the wide landscape made up of so much blended beauty. Neither of them spoke. The murmuring voice of the river, the pure air, and the cloudless heaven were all in tune with their thronging thoughts and their youth and the love in their hearts.

"Oh! my God, how I love this country!" Julie continued, with growing and ingenuous enthusiasm. "You lived here for a long while, did you not?" she added after a pause.

A thrill ran through Lord Grenville at her words.

"It was down there," he said, in a melancholy voice, indicating as he spoke a cluster of walnut-trees by the roadside, "that I, a prisoner, saw you for the first time."

"Yes, but even at that time I felt very sad. This country looked wild to me then, but now——" She broke off, and Lord Grenville did not dare to look at her.

"All this pleasure I owe to you," Julie began at last, after a long silence. "Only the living can feel the joy of life, and until now have I not been dead to it all? You have given me more than health, you have made me feel all its worth——"

Women have an inimitable talent for giving utterance to strong feeling in colorless words; a woman's eloquence lies in tone and gesture, manner and glance. Lord Grenville hid

* A tributary of the Loire.

his face in his hands, for the tears filled his eyes. This was Julie's first word of thanks since they left Paris a year ago.

For a whole year he had watched over the marquise, putting his whole self into the task. D'Aiglemont seconding him, he had taken her first to Aix, then to La Rochelle, to be near the sea. From moment to moment he had watched the changes worked in Julie's shattered constitution by his wise and simple prescriptions. He had cultivated her health as an enthusiastic gardener might cultivate a rare flower. Yet, to all appearance, the marquise had quietly accepted Arthur's skill and care with the egoism of a spoiled Parisienne, or like a courtesan who has no idea of the cost of things, nor of the worth of a man, and judges of both by their comparative usefulness to her.

The influence of places upon us is a fact worth remarking. If melancholy comes over us by the margin of a great water, another indelible law of our nature so orders it that the mountains exercise a purifying influence upon our feelings, and among the hills passion gains in depth by all that it apparently loses in vivacity. Perhaps it was the sight of the wide country by the Loire, the height of the fair sloping hillside on which the lovers sat, that induced the calm bliss of the moment when the whole extent of the passion that lies beneath a few insignificant-sounding words is divined for the first time with a delicious sense of happiness.

Julie had scarcely spoken the words which had moved Lord Grenville so deeply, when a caressing breeze ruffled the tree-tops and filled the air with coolness from the river; a few clouds crossed the sky, and the soft cloud-shadows brought out all the beauty of the fair land below.

Julie turned away her head, lest Arthur should see the tears which she succeeded in repressing; his emotion had spread at once to her. She dried her eyes, but she dared not raise them lest he should read the excess of joy in a glance. Her woman's instinct told her that during this hour of danger she

must hide her love in the depths of her heart. Yet silence might prove equally dangerous, and Julie saw that Lord Grenville was unable to utter a word. She went on, therefore, in a gentle voice—

"You are touched by what I have said. Perhaps such a quick outburst of feeling is the way in which a gracious and kind nature like yours reverses a mistaken judgment. You must have thought me ungrateful when I was cold and reserved, or cynical and hard, all through the journey which, fortunately, is very near its end. I should not have been worthy of your care if I had been unable to appreciate it. I have forgotten nothing. Alas! I shall forget nothing, not the anxious way in which you watched over me as a mother watches over her child, nor, and above all else, the noble confidence of our life as brother and sister, the delicacy of your conduct—winning charms, against which we women are defenseless. My lord, it is out of my power to make you a return——"

At those words Julie hastily moved farther away, and Lord Grenville made no attempt to detain her. She went to a rock not far away, and there sat motionless. What either felt remained a secret known to each alone; doubtless they wept in silence. The singing of the birds about them, so blithe, so overflowing with tenderness at sunset time, could only increase the storm of passion which had driven them apart. Nature took up their story for them, and found a language for the love of which they did not dare to speak.

"And now, my lord," said Julie, and she came and stood before Arthur with a great dignity, which allowed her to take his hand in hers. "I am going to ask you to hallow and purify the life which you have given back to me. Here, we will part. I know," she added, as she saw how white his face grew, "I know that I am repaying you for your devotion by requiring of you a sacrifice even greater than any which you have hitherto made for me, sacrifices so great that they should

receive some better recompense than this. But it must be. You must not stay in France. By laying this command upon you, do I not give you rights which shall be held sacred?" she added, holding his hand against her beating heart.

"Yes," said Arthur, and he arose.

He looked in the direction of d'Aiglemont, who appeared on the opposite side of one of the hollow walks with the child in his arms. He had scrambled up on the balustrade by the manor-house that little Helene might jump down.

"Julie, I will say not a word of my love; we understand each other too well. Deeply and carefully though I have hidden the pleasures of my heart, you have shared them all. I feel it, I know it, I see it. And now, at this moment, as I receive this delicious proof of the constant sympathy of our hearts, I must go. Cunning schemes for getting rid of him have crossed my mind too often; the temptation might be irresistible if I stayed with you."

"I had the same thought," she said, a look of pained surprise in her troubled face.

Yet in her tone and involuntary shudder there was such virtue, such certainty of herself, won in many a hard-fought battle with a love that spoke in Julie's tones and involuntary gestures, that Lord Grenville stood thrilled with admiration of her. The mere shadow of a crime had been dispelled from that clear conscience. The religious sentiment enthroned on the fair forehead could not but drive away the evil thoughts that arise unbidden, engendered by our imperfect nature, thoughts which make us aware of the grandeur and the perils of human destiny.

"And then," she said, "I should have drawn down your scorn upon me, and—— I should have been saved," she added, and her eyes fell. "To be lowered in your eyes, what is that but death?"

For a moment the two heroic lovers were silent, choking down their sorrow. Good or ill, it seemed that their thoughts

were loyally one, and the joys in the depths of their hearts were no more experiences apart than the pain which they strove most anxiously to hide.

"I have no right to complain," she said after a while, "my misery is of my own making," and she raised her tear-filled eyes to the sky.

"Perhaps you don't remember it, but that is the place where we met each other for the first time," shouted the general from below, and he waved his hand toward the distance. "There, down yonder, near those poplars!"

The Englishman nodded abruptly by way of answer.

"So I was bound to die young and to know no happiness," Julie continued. "Yes, do not think that I live. Sorrow is just as fatal as the dreadful disease which you have cured. I do not think that I am to blame. No. My love is stronger than I am, and eternal; but all unconsciously it grew in me; and I will not be guilty through my love. Nevertheless, though I shall be faithful to my conscience as a wife, to my duties as a mother, I will be no less faithful to the instincts of my heart. Hear me," she cried in an unsteady voice, "henceforth I belong to *him* no longer."

By a gesture, dreadful to see in its undisguised loathing, she indicated her husband.

"The social code demands that I should make his existence happy," she continued. "I will obey, I will be his servant, my devotion to him shall be boundless; but from to-day I am a widow. I will neither be a prostitute in my own eyes nor in those of the world. If I do not belong to Monsieur d'Aiglemont, I will never belong to another. You shall have nothing, nothing save this which you have wrung from me. This is the doom which I have passed upon myself," she said, looking proudly at him. "And now, know this—if you give way to a single criminal thought, Monsieur d'Aiglemont's widow will enter a convent in Spain or Italy. By an evil chance we have spoken of our love; perhaps that confession was bound to

come; but our hearts must never again vibrate like this. To-morrow you will receive a letter from England, and we shall part and never see each other again."

The effort had exhausted all Julie's strength. She felt her knees trembling, and a feeling of deathly cold came over her. Obeying a woman's instinct, she sat down, lest she should sink into Arthur's arms.

"*Julie!*" cried Lord Grenville.

The sharp cry rang through the air like a crack of thunder. Till then he could not speak; now, all the words which the dumb lover could not utter gathered themselves in that heart-rending appeal.

"Well, what is wrong with her?" asked the general, who had hurried up at that cry, and now suddenly confronted the two.

"Nothing serious," said Julie, with that wonderful self-possession which a woman's quick-wittedness usually brings to her aid when it is most called for. "The chill, damp air under the walnut-tree made me feel quite faint just now, and that must have alarmed this doctor of mine. Does he not look on me as a very nearly finished work of art? He was startled, I suppose, by the idea of seeing it destroyed." With ostentatious coolness she took Lord Grenville's arm, smiled at her husband, took a last look at the landscape, and went down the pathway, drawing her traveling companion along with her.

"This certainly is the grandest view that we have seen," she said; "I shall never forget it. Just look, Victor, what distance, what an expanse of country, and what variety in it! I have fallen in love with this landscape."

Her laughter was almost hysterical, but to her husband it sounded natural. She sprang gayly down into the hollow pathway and vanished.

"What?" she cried, when they had left M. d'Aiglemont far behind. "So soon? Is it so soon? Another moment,

and we can neither of us be ourselves; we shall never be ourselves again, our life is over, in short——"

"Let us go slowly," said Lord Grenville, "the carriages are still some way off, and if we may put words into our glances, our hearts may live a little longer."

They went along the footpath by the river in the late evening light, almost in silence; such vague words as they uttered, low as the murmur of the Loire, stirred their souls to the depths. Just as the sun sank, a last red gleam from the sky fell over them; it was like a mournful symbol of their ill-starred love.

The general, much put out because the carriage was not at the spot where they left it, followed and outstripped the pair without interrupting their conversation. Lord Grenville's high-minded and delicate behavior throughout the journey had completely dispelled the marquis' suspicions. For some time past he had left his wife in freedom, reposing confidence in the noble amateur's Punic faith. Arthur and Julie walked on together in the close and painful communion of two hearts laid waste.

So short a while ago as they climbed the cliffs at Montcontour, there had been a vague hope in either mind, an uneasy joy for which they dared not account to themselves; but now as they came along the pathway by the river, they pulled down the frail structure of imaginings, the child's card-castle, on which neither of them had dared to breathe. That hope was over.

That very evening Lord Grenville left them. His last look at Julie made it miserably plain that since the moment when sympathy revealed the full extent of a tyrannous passion, he did well to mistrust himself.

The next morning M. d'Aiglemont and his wife took their places in their carriage without their traveling companion, and were whirled swiftly along the road to Blois. The marquise was constantly put in mind of the journey made in 1814,

when as yet she knew nothing of love, and had been almost ready to curse it for its persistency. Countless forgotten impressions were revived. The heart has its own memory. A woman who cannot recollect the most important great events will recollect through a lifetime things which appealed to her feelings; and Julie d'Aiglemont found all the most trifling details of that journey laid up in her mind. It was pleasant to her to recall its little incidents as they occurred to her one by one; there were points in the road when she could even remember the thoughts that passed through her mind when she saw them first.

Victor had fallen violently in love with his wife since she had recovered the freshness of her youth and all her beauty, and now he pressed close to her side like a lover. Once he tried to put his arm round her, but she gently disengaged herself, finding some excuse or other for evading the harmless caress. In a little while she shrank from the close contact with Victor, the sensation of warmth communicated by their position. She tried to take the unoccupied place opposite, but Victor gallantly resigned the back seat to her. For this attention she thanked him with a sigh, whereupon he forgot himself, and the Don Juan of the garrison construed his wife's melancholy to his own advantage, so that at the end of the day she was compelled to speak with a firmness which impressed him.

"You have all but killed me, dear, once already, as you know," said she. "If I were still an inexperienced girl, I might begin to sacrifice myself afresh; but I am a mother, I have a daughter to bring up, and I owe as much to her as to you. Let us resign ourselves to a misfortune which affects us both alike. You are the less to be pitied. Have you not, as it is, found consolations which duty and the honor of both, and (stronger still) which Nature forbids to me? Stay," she added, "you carelessly left three letters from Madame de Sérizy in a drawer; here they are. My silence about this

matter should make it plain to you that in me you have a wife who has plenty of indulgence and does not exact from you the sacrifices prescribed by the law. But I have thought enough to see that the roles of husband and wife are quite different, and that the wife alone is predestined to misfortune. My virtue is based upon firmly fixed and definite principles. I shall live blamelessly, but let me live."

The marquis was taken aback by a logic which women grasp with the clear insight of love, and overawed by a certain dignity natural to them at such crises. Julie's instinctive repugnance for all that jarred upon her love and the instincts of her heart is one of the fairest qualities of woman, and springs perhaps from a natural virtue which neither laws nor civilization can silence. And who shall dare to blame women? If a woman can silence the exclusive sentiment which bids her "forsake all other" for the man whom she loves, what is she but a priest who has lost his faith? If a rigid mind here and there condemns Julie for a sort of compromise between love and wifely duty, impassioned souls will lay it to her charge as a crime. To be thus blamed by both sides shows one of two things very clearly—that misery necessarily follows in the train of broken laws, or else that there are deplorable flaws in the institutions upon which society in Europe is based.

Two years went by. M. and Mme. d'Aiglemont went their separate ways, leading their life in the world, meeting each other more frequently abroad than at home, a refinement upon divorce, in which many a marriage in the great world is apt to end.

One evening, strange to say, found husband and wife in their own drawing-room. Mme. d'Aiglemont had been dining at home with a friend, and the general, who almost invariably dined in town, had not gone out for once.

"There is a pleasant time in store for you, *Madame la Marquise*," said M. d'Aiglemont, setting his coffee cup down upon

the table. He looked at the guest, Mme. de Wimphen, and half-pettishly, half-mischievously added, "I am starting off for several days' sport with the master of the hounds. For a whole week, at any rate, you will be a widow in good earnest; just what you wish for, I suppose. Guillaume," he said to the servant who entered, "tell them to put the horses in."

Mme. de Wimphen was the friend to whom Julie had begun the letter upon her marriage. The glances exchanged by the two women said plainly that in her Julie had found an intimate friend, an indulgent and invaluable confidant. Mme. de Wimphen's marriage had been a very happy one. Perhaps it was her own happiness which secured her devotion to Julie's unhappy life, for, under such circumstances, dissimilarity of destiny is nearly always a strong bond of union.

"Is the hunting season not over yet?" asked Julie, with an indifferent glance at her husband.

"The master of the hounds comes when and where he pleases, madame. We are going boar-hunting in the Royal Forest."

"Take care that no accident happens to you."

"Accidents are usually unforeseen," he said, smiling.

"The carriage is ready, my lord marquis," said the servant.

"Madame, if I should fall a victim to the boar——" he continued, with a suppliant air.

"What does this mean?" inquired Mme. de Wimphen.

"Come, come," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, turning to her husband; smiling at her friend as if to say, "You will soon see."

Julie held up her head; but as her husband came close to her, she swerved at the last, so that his kiss fell not on her throat, but on the broad frill about it.

"You will be my witness before heaven now that I need a firman to obtain this little grace of her," said the marquis, addressing Mme. de Wimphen. "This is how this wife of

mine understands love. She has brought me to this pass, by what trickery I am at a loss to know—— A pleasant time to you!" and he went.

"But your poor husband is really very good-natured," cried Louisa de Wimphen, when the two women were alone together. He loves you."

"Oh! not another syllable after that last word. The name I bear makes me shudder——"

"Yes, but Victor obeys you implicitly," said Louisa.

"His obedience is founded in part upon the great esteem which I have inspired in him. As far as outward things go, I am a model wife. I make his house pleasant to him; I shut my eyes to his intrigues; I touch not a penny of his fortune. He is free to squander the interest exactly as he pleases; I only stipulate that he shall not touch the principal. At this price I have peace. He neither explains nor attempts to explain my life. But though my husband is guided by me, that does not say that I have nothing to fear from his character. I am a bear-leader who daily trembles lest the muzzle should give way at last. If Victor once took it into his head that I had forfeited my right to his esteem, what would happen next I dare not think; for he is violent, full of personal pride, and vain above all things. While his wits are not keen enough to enable him to behave discreetly at a delicate crisis when his lowest passions are involved, his character is weak, and he would very likely kill me provisionally even if he died of remorse next day. But there is no fear of that fatal good-fortune."

A brief pause followed. Both women were thinking of the real cause of this state of affairs. Julie gave Louisa a glance which revealed her thoughts.

"I have been cruelly obeyed," she cried. "Yet I never forbade him to write me. Oh! he, *he* has forgotten me, and he is right. If his life had been spoiled, it would have been too tragical; one life is enough, is it not? Would you be-

lieve it, dear; I read English newspapers simply to see his name in print. But he has not yet taken his seat in the House of Lords."

"So you know English?"

"Did I not tell you? Yes, I learned."

"Poor little one!" cried Louisa, grasping Julie's hand in hers. "How can you still live?"

"That is a secret," said the marquise, with an involuntary gesture almost childlike in its simplicity. "Listen, I take laudanum. That duchess in London suggested the idea; you know the story, Maturin made use of it in one of his novels. My drops are very weak, but I sleep; I am only awake for seven hours in the day, and those hours I spend with my child."

Louisa gazed into the fire. The full extent of her friend's misery was opening out before her for the first time and she dared not look into her face.

"Keep my secret, Louisa," said Julie, after a moment's silence.

Just as she spoke the footman brought in a letter for the marquise.

"Ah!" she cried, and her face grew white.

"I need not ask from whom it comes," said Mme. de Wimphen, but the marquise was reading the letter, and heeded nothing else.

Mme. de Wimphen, watching her friend, saw strong feeling wrought to the highest pitch, ecstasy of the most dangerous kind painted on Julie's face in swift-changing white and red. At length Julie flung the sheet into the fire.

"It burns like fire," she said. "Oh! my heart beats till I cannot breathe."

She rose to her feet and walked up and down. Her eyes were blazing.

"He did not leave Paris!" she cried.

Mme. de Wimphen did not dare to interrupt the words

that followed, jerked-out sentences, measured by dreadful pauses in between. After every break the deep notes of her voice sank lower and lower. There was something awful about the last words.

"He has seen me, constantly, and I have not known it.—A look, taken by stealth, every day, helps him to live.—Louisa, you do not know!—He is dying.—He wants to say good-by to me. He knows that my husband has gone away for several days. He will be here in a moment. Oh! I shall die: I am lost.—Listen, Louisa, stay with me! Two women and he will not dare—— Oh! stay with me!—*I am afraid!*"

"But my husband knows that I have been dining with you; he is sure to come for me," said Mme. de Wimphen.

"Well, then, before you go I will send *him* away. I will play the executioner for us both. Oh me! he will think that I do not love him any more—— And that letter of his! Dear, I can see those words in letters of fire."

A carriage rolled in under the archway.

"Ah!" cried the marquise, with something like joy in her voice, "he is coming openly. He makes no mystery of it."

"Lord Grenville," announced the servant.

The marquise stood up rigid and motionless; but at the sight of Arthur's white face, so thin and haggard, how was it possible to keep up the show of severity? Lord Grenville saw that Julie was not alone, but he controlled his fierce annoyance, and looked cool and unperturbed. Yet for the two women who knew his secret, his face, his tones, the look in his eyes had something of the power attributed to the torpedo. Their faculties were benumbed by the sharp shock of contact with his horrible pain. The sound of his voice set Julie's heart beating so cruelly that she could not trust herself to speak; she was afraid that he would see the full extent of his power over her. Lord Grenville did not dare to look at Julie, and Mme. de Wimphen was left to sustain a conversa-

tion to which no one listened. Julie glanced at her friend with touching gratefulness in her eyes to thank her for coming to her aid.

By this time the lovers had quelled emotion into silence, and could preserve the limits laid down by duty and convention. But M. de Wimphen was announced, and as he came in the two friends exchanged glances. Both felt the difficulties of this fresh complication. It was impossible to enter into explanations with M. de Wimphen, and Louisa could not think of any sufficient pretext for asking to be left.

Julie went to her, ostensibly to wrap her up in her shawl. "I will be brave," she said, in a low voice. "He came here in face of all the world, so what I have to fear? Yet, but for you, in that first moment, when I saw how changed he looked, I should have fallen at his feet."

"Well, Arthur, you have broken your promise to me," she said, in a faltering voice, when she returned. Lord Grenville did not venture to take the seat upon the sofa by her side.

"I could not resist the pleasure of hearing your voice, of being near you. The thought of it came to be a sort of madness, a delirious frenzy. I am no longer master of myself. I have taken myself to task; it is no use, I am too weak, I ought to die. But to die without seeing you, without having heard the rustle of your dress, or felt your tears. What a death!"

He moved farther away from her; but in his hasty uprising a pistol fell out of his pocket. The marquise looked down blankly at the weapon; all passion, all expression had died out of his eyes. Lord Grenville stooped for the thing, raging inwardly over an accident which seemed like a piece of love-sick strategy.

"*Arthur!*"

"Madame," he said, looking down, "I came here in utter desperation; I meant——" he broke off.

"You meant to die by your own hand here in my house!"

"Not alone," he said in a low voice.

"Not alone! My husband, perhaps——?"

"No, no," he cried in a choking voice. "Reassure yourself," he continued, "I have quite given up my deadly purpose. As soon as I came in, as soon as I saw you, I felt that I was strong enough to suffer in silence, and to die alone."

Julie sprang up, and flung herself into his arms. Through her sobbing he caught a few passionate words, "To know happiness, and then to die. Yes, let it be so."

All Julie's story was summed up in that cry from the depths; it was the summons of nature and of love at which women without a religion surrender. With the fierce energy of unhoped-for joy, Arthur caught her up and carried her to the sofa; but in a moment she tore herself from her lover's arms, looked at him with a fixed despairing gaze, took his hand, snatched up a candle, and drew him into her room. When they stood by the cot where Helene lay sleeping, she put the curtains softly aside, shading the candle with her hand, lest the light should dazzle the half-closed eyes beneath the transparent lids. Helene lay smiling in her sleep, with her arms outstretched on the coverlet. Julie glanced from her child to Arthur's face. That look told him all.

"We may leave a husband, even though he loves us: a man is strong; he has consolations. We may defy the world and its laws. But a motherless child!"—all these thoughts, and a thousand others more moving still, found language in that glance.

"We can take her with us," muttered he; "I will love her dearly."

"Mamma!" cried little Helene, now awake. Julie burst into tears. Lord Grenville sat down and folded his arms in gloomy silence.

"Mamma!" At the sweet childish name, so many nobler feelings, so many irresistible yearnings awoke, that for a moment love was effaced by the all-powerful instinct of mother-

SHE PUT THE CURTAINS SOFTLY ASIDE.

hood; the mother triumphed over the woman in Julie, and Lord Grenville could not hold out, he was defeated by Julie's tears.

Just at that moment a door was flung noisily open. "Madame d'Aiglemont, are you hereabout?" called a voice which rang like a crack of thunder through the hearts of the two lovers. The marquis had come home.

Before Julie could recover her presence of mind, her husband was on the way to the door of her room which opened into his. Luckily, at a sign, Lord Grenville escaped into the dressing-closet, and she hastily shut the door upon him.

"Well, my lady, here am I," said Victor, "the hunting party did not come off. I am just going to bed."

"Good-night, so am I. So go and leave me to undress."

"You are very cross to-night, Madame la Marquise."

The general returned to his room, Julie went with him to the door and shut it. Then she sprang to the dressing-closet to release Arthur. All her presence of mind returned; she bethought herself that it was quite natural that her sometime doctor should pay her a visit; she might have left him in the drawing-room while she put her little girl to bed. She was about to tell him, under her breath, to go back to the drawing-room, and had opened the door. Then she shrieked aloud. Lord Grenville's fingers had been caught and crushed in the door.

"Well, what is it?" demanded her husband.

"Oh! nothing, nothing, I have just pricked my finger with a pin."

The general's door opened at once. Julie imagined that the irruption was due to a sudden concern for her, and cursed a solicitude in which love had no part. She had barely time to close the dressing-closet, and Lord Grenville had not extricated his hand. The general did, in fact, appear, but his wife had mistaken his motives; his apprehensions were entirely on his own account.

"Can you lend me a bandana handkerchief? That stupid fool Charles leaves me without a single one. In the early days you used to bother me with looking after me so carefully. Ah, well, the honeymoon did not last very long for me, nor yet for my cravats. Nowadays I am given over to the secular arm, in the shape of servants who do not care one jack-straw for what I say."

"There! There is a bandana for you. Did you go into the drawing-room?"

"No."

"Oh! you might perhaps have been in time to see Lord Grenville."

"Is he in Paris?"

"It seems so."

"Oh! I will go at once. The good doctor."

"But he will have gone by now!" exclaimed Julie.

The marquis, standing in the middle of the room, was tying the handkerchief over his head. He looked complacently at himself in the glass.

"What has become of the servants is more than I know," he said. "I rang the bell three times for Charles, and he did not answer it. And your maid is not here either. Ring for her. I should like another blanket on my bed to-night."

"Pauline is out," the marquise said drily.

"What, at midnight?" exclaimed the general.

"I gave her leave to go to the opera."

"That is funny!" returned the husband, continuing to undress. "I thought I saw her coming upstairs."

"She has come in then, of course," said Julie, with assumed impatience, and to allay any possible suspicion on her husband's part she pretended to ring the bell.

The whole history of that night has never been known, but no doubt it was as simple and as tragically commonplace as the domestic incidents that preceded it.

Next day the Marquise d'Aiglemont took to her bed, nor did she leave it for some days.

"What can have happened in your family so extraordinary that every one is talking about your wife?" asked M. de Ronquerolles of M. d'Aiglemont a short time after that night of catastrophes.

"Take my advice and remain a bachelor," said d'Aiglemont. "The curtains of Helene's cot caught fire and gave my wife such a shock that it will be a twelvemonth before she gets over it; so the doctor says. You marry a pretty wife, and her looks fall off; you marry a girl in blooming health, and she turns into an invalid. You think she has a passionate temperament, and find her cold, or else under her apparent coldness there lurks a nature so passionate that she is the death of you, or she dishonors your name. Sometimes the meekest of them will turn out crotchety, though the crotchety ones never grow any sweeter. Sometimes the mere child, so simple and silly at first, will develop an iron will to thwart you and the ingenuity of a fiend. I am tired of marriage."

"Or of your wife?"

"That would be difficult. By-the-by, do you feel inclined to go to Saint-Thomas d'Aquin with me to attend Lord Grenville's funeral?"

"A singular way of spending time. Is it really known how he came by his death?" added Ronquerolles.

"His man says that he spent a whole night sitting on somebody's window-sill to save some woman's character, and it has been infernally cold lately."

"Such devotion would be highly creditable to one of us old stagers; but Lord Grenville was a youngster and—an Englishman. Englishmen never can do anything like anybody else."

"Pooh!" returned d'Aiglemont, "these heroic exploits all depend upon the woman in the case, and it certainly was not for one that I know that poor Arthur came by his death."

II.

A HIDDEN GRIEF.

Between the Seine and the little river Loing lies a wide flat country, skirted on the one side by the Forest of Fontainebleau, and marked out as to its southern limits by the towns of Moret, Montereau, and Nemours. It is a dreary country; little knolls of hills appear only at rare intervals, and a coppice here and there among the fields affords cover for game; and beyond, upon every side, stretches the endless gray or yellowish horizon peculiar to Beauce, Sologne, and Berri.

In the very centre of the plain, at equal distances from Moret and Montereau, the traveler passes the old castle of Saint-Lange, standing amid surroundings which lack neither dignity nor stateliness. There are magnificent avenues of elm-trees, great gardens encircled by the moat, and a circumference of walls about a huge memorial pile which represents the profits of the *maltôte* (illegal taxation), the gains of farmers-general, legalized malversation, or the vast fortunes of great houses now brought low beneath the hammer of the Civil Code.

Should any artist or dreamer of dreams chance to stray along the roads full of deep ruts, or over the heavy land which secures the place against intrusion, he will wonder how it happened that this romantic old place was set down in a savanna of grain-land, a desert of chalk, and sand, and marl, where gayety dies away and melancholy is a natural product of the soil. The voiceless solitude, the monotonous horizon-line which weigh upon the spirits, are negative beauties, which only suit with sorrow that refuses to be comforted.

Hither, at the close of the year 1820, came a woman, still

young, well known in Paris for her charm, her fair face, and her wit; and to the immense astonishment of the little village a mile away, this woman of high rank and corresponding fortune took up her abode at Saint-Lange.

From time immemorial, farmers and laborers had seen no gentry at the mansion. The estate, considerable though it was, had been left in charge of a land-steward and the house to the old servants. Wherefore the appearance of the lady of the manor caused a kind of sensation in the district.

A group had gathered in the yard of the wretched little wineshop at the end of the village (where the road forks to Nemours and Moret) to see the carriage pass. It went by slowly, for the marquise had come from Paris with her own horses, and those on the lookout had ample opportunity of observing a waiting-maid, who sat with her back to the horses holding a little girl, with a somewhat dreamy look, upon her knee. The child's mother lay back in the carriage; she looked like a dying woman sent out into country air by her doctors as a last resource. Village politicians were by no means pleased to see the young, delicate, downcast face; they had hoped that the new arrival at Saint-Lange would bring some life and stir into the neighborhood, and clearly any sort of stir or movement must be distasteful to the suffering invalid in the traveling carriage.

That evening, when the notables of Saint-Lange were drinking in the private room of the wineshop, the longest head among them declared that such depression could admit of but one construction—the marquise was ruined. His lordship the marquis was away in Spain with the Duc d'Angoulême (so they said in the papers), and beyond a doubt her ladyship had come to Saint-Lange to retrench after a run of ill-luck on the Bourse. The marquis was one of the greatest gamblers on the face of the globe. Perhaps the estate would be cut up and sold in little lots. There would be some good strokes of business to be made in that case, and it behooved everybody

to count up his cash, unearth his savings, and to see how he stood, so as to secure his share of the spoil of Saint-Lange.

So fair did this future seem that the village worthies, dying to know whether it was founded on fact, began to think of ways of getting at the truth through the servants at the manor-house. None of these, however, could throw any light on the calamity which had brought their mistress into the country at the beginning of winter, and to the old castle of Saint-Lange of all places, when she might have taken her choice of cheerful country-houses famous for their beautiful gardens.

His worship the mayor called to pay his respects; but he did not see the lady. Then the land-steward tried with no better success.

Madame la Marquise kept her room, only leaving it, while it was set in order, for the small adjoining drawing-room, where she dined; if, indeed, to sit down to a table, to look with disgust at the dishes, and taking the precise amount of nourishment required to prevent death from sheer starvation, can be called dining. The meal over, she returned at once to the old-fashioned low chair, in which she had sat since the morning, in the embrasure of the one window that lighted her room.

Her little girl she only saw for a few minutes daily, during the dismal dinner, and even for that short time she seemed scarcely able to bear the child's presence. Surely nothing but the most unheard-of anguish could have extinguished a mother's love so early.

None of the servants were suffered to come near, her own woman was the one creature whom she liked to have about her; the castle must be perfectly quiet, the child must play at the other end of the house. The slightest sound had grown so intolerable that any human voice, even the voice of her own child, jarred upon her.

At first the whole countryside was deeply interested in these eccentricities; but time passed on, every possible hypothesis

had been advanced to account for them, and the peasants and dwellers in the little country towns thought no more of the invalid lady.

So the marquise was left to herself. She might live on, perfectly silent, amid the silence which she herself had created; there was nothing to draw her forth from the tapestried chamber where her grandmother had died, whither she herself had come that she might die, gently, without witnesses, without importunate solicitude, without suffering from the insincere demonstrations of egoism masquerading as affection, which double the agony of death in great cities.

She was twenty-six years old. At that age, with plenty of romantic illusions still left, the mind loves to dwell on the thought of death when death seems to come as a friend. But with youth, death is coy, coming up close only to go away, showing himself and hiding again, till youth has time to fall out of love with him during this dalliance. There is that uncertainty, too, that hangs over death's to-morrow. Youth plunges back into the world of living men, there to find the pain more pitiless than death, that does not wait to strike.

This woman who refused to live was to know the bitterness of these reprieves in the depths of her loneliness; in moral agony, which death would not come to end, she was to serve a terrible apprenticeship to the egoism which must take the bloom from her heart and break her in to the life of the world.

This harsh and sorry teaching is the usual outcome of our early sorrows. For the first, and perhaps for the last time in her life, the Marquise d'Aiglemont was in very truth suffering. And, indeed, would it not be an error to suppose that the same sentiment can be reproduced in us? Once develop the power to feel, is it not always there in the depths of our nature? The accidents of life may lull or awaken it, but there it is, of necessity modifying the self, its abiding-place. Hence, every sensation should have its great day once and for all, its

first day of storm, be it long or short. Hence, likewise, pain, the most abiding of our sensations, could be keenly felt only at its first irruption, its intensity diminishing with every subsequent paroxysm, either because we grow accustomed to these crises, or perhaps because a natural instinct of self-preservation asserts itself and opposes to the destroying force of anguish an equal but passive force of inertia.

Yet of all kinds of suffering, to which does the name of anguish belong? For the loss of parents, Nature has in a manner prepared us; physical suffering, again, is an evil which passes over us and is gone; it lays no hold upon the soul; if it persists, it ceases to be an evil, it is death. The young mother loses her firstborn, but wedded love ere long gives her a successor. This grief, too, is transient. After all, these, and many other troubles like unto them, are in some sort wounds and bruises; they do not sap the springs of vitality, and only a succession of such blows can crush in us the instinct that seeks happiness. Great pain, therefore—pain that rises to anguish—should be suffering so deadly that past, present, and future are alike included in its grip and no part of life is left sound and whole. Never afterward can we think the same thoughts as before. Anguish engraves itself in ineffaceable characters on mouth and brow; it passes through us, destroying or relaxing the springs that vibrate to enjoyment, leaving behind in the soul the seeds of a disgust for all things in this world.

Yet, again, to be measureless, to weigh like this upon body and soul, the trouble should befall when soul and body have just come to their full strength, and smite down a heart that beats high with life. Then it is that great scars are made. Terrible is the anguish. None, it may be, can issue from this soul-sickness without undergoing some dramatic change. Those who survive it, those who remain on earth, return to the world to wear an actor's countenance and to play an actor's part. They know the side-scenes whither actors retire

to calculate chances, shed their tears, or pass their jests. Life holds no inscrutable dark-places for those who have passed through this ordeal; their judgments are Rhadamanthine.

For young women of the Marquise d'Aiglemont's age, this first, this most poignant pain of all, is always referable to the same cause. A woman, especially if she is a young woman, greatly beautiful and by nature great, never fails to stake her whole life as instinct and sentiment and society all unite to bid her. Suppose that that life fails her, suppose that she still lives on, she cannot but endure the most cruel pangs, inasmuch as a first-love is the loveliest of all. How comes it that this catastrophe has found no painter, no poet? And yet, can it be painted? Can it be sung? No; for the anguish arising from it eludes analysis and defies the colors of art. And more than this, such pain is never confessed. To console the sufferer, you must be able to divine the past which she hugs in bitterness to her soul like a remorse; it is like an avalanche in a valley, it laid all waste before it found a permanent resting-place.

The marquise was suffering from this anguish, which will for long remain unknown, because the whole world condemns it, while sentiment cherishes it, and the conscience of a true woman justifies her in it. It is with such pain as with children steadily disowned of life, and therefore bound more closely to the mother's heart than other children more bounteously endowed. Never, perhaps, was the awful catastrophe in which the whole world without dies for us, so deadly so complete, so cruelly aggravated by circumstance as it had been for the marquise. The man whom she had loved was young and generous; in obedience to the laws of the world, she had refused herself to his love, and he had died to save a woman's honor, as the world calls it. To whom could she speak of her misery? Her tears would be an offense to her husband, the origin of the tragedy. By all laws written and

unwritten she was bound over to silence. A woman would have enjoyed the story; a man would have schemed for his own benefit. No; such grief as hers can only weep freely in solitude and in loneliness; she must consume her pain or be consumed by it; die or kill something within her—her conscience, it may be.

Day after day she sat gazing at the flat horizon. It lay out before her like her own life to come. There was nothing to discover, nothing to hope. The whole of it could be seen at a glance. It was the visible presentment in the outward world of the chill sense of desolation which was gnawing restlessly at her heart. The misty mornings, the pale, bright sky, the low clouds scudding under the gray dome of heaven, fitted with the moods of her soul-sickness. Her heart did not contract, was neither more nor less seared, rather it seemed as if her youth, in its full blossom, was slowly turned to stone by an anguish intolerable because it was barren. She suffered through herself and for herself. How could it end save in self-absorption? Ugly torturing thoughts probed her conscience. Candid self-examination pronounced that she was double, there were two selves within her; a woman who felt and a woman who thought; a self that suffered and a self that would fain suffer no longer. Her mind traveled back to the joys of childish days; they had gone by, and she had never known how happy they were. Scenes crowded up in her memory as in a bright mirror-glass, to demonstrate the deception of a marriage which—all that it should be in the eyes of the world—was in reality so wretched. What had the delicate pride of young womanhood done for her—the bliss forgone, the sacrifices made to the world? Everything in her expressed love, awaited love; her movements still were full of perfect grace; her smile, her charm, were hers as before; why? she asked herself. The sense of her own youth and physical loveliness no more affected her than some meaningless reiterated sound. Her very beauty had grown intolerable

to her as a useless thing. She shrank aghast from the thought that through the rest of life she must remain an incomplete creature; had not the inner self lost its power of receiving impressions with that zest, that exquisite sense of freshness which is the spring of so much of life's gladness? The impressions of the future would for the most part be effaced as soon as received, and many of the thoughts which once would have moved her now would move her no more.

After the childhood of the creature dawns the childhood of the heart; but this second infancy was over, her lover had taken it down with him into the grave. The longings of youth remained; she was young yet; but the completeness of youth was gone, and with that lost completeness the whole value and savor of life had diminished somewhat. Would she not always bear within her the seeds of sadness and mistrust, ready to grow up and rob emotion of its springtide of fervor? Conscious she must always be that nothing could give her now the happiness so longed for, that seemed so fair in her dreams. The fire from heaven that sheds abroad its light in the heart, in the dawn of love, had been quenched in tears, the first real tears which she had shed; henceforth she must always suffer, because it was no longer in her power to be what once she might have been. This is a belief which turns us in aversion and bitterness of spirit from any proffered new delight.

Julie had come to look at life from the point of view of age about to die. Young though she felt, the heavy weight of joyless days had fallen upon her, and left her broken-spirited and old before her time. With a despairing cry, she asked the world what it could give her in exchange for the love now lost, by which she had lived. She asked herself whether in that vanished love, so chaste and pure, her will had not been more criminal than her deeds, and chose to believe herself guilty; partly to affront the world, partly for her own consolation, in that she had missed the close union of body and soul, which diminishes the pain of the one who

is left behind by the knowledge that once it has known and given joy to the full, and retains within itself the impress of that which is no more.

Something of the mortification of the actress cheated of her part mingled with the pain which thrilled through every fibre of her heart and brain. Her nature had been thwarted, her vanity wounded, her woman's generosity cheated of self-sacrifice. Then, when she had raised all these questions, set vibrating all the strings in those different phases of being which we distinguish as social, moral, and physical, her energies were so far exhausted and relaxed that she was powerless to grasp a single thought amid the chaos of conflicting ideas.

Sometimes, as the mists fell, she would throw her window open, and would stay there, motionless, breathing in unheedingly the damp earthy scent in the air, her mind to all appearance an unintelligent blank, for the ceaseless burden of sorrow humming in her brain left her deaf to earth's harmonies and insensible to the delights of thought.

One day, toward noon, when the sun shone out for a little, her maid came in without a summons.

"This is the fourth time that Monsieur le Curé has come to see Madame la Marquise; to-day he is so determined about it that we did not know what to tell him."

"He has come to ask for some money for the poor, no doubt; take him twenty-five louis from me."

The woman went only to return.

"Monsieur le Curé will not take the money, my lady; he wants to speak to you."

"Then let him come!" said Mme. d'Aiglemont, with an involuntary shrug which augured ill for the priest's reception. Evidently the lady meant to put a stop to persecution by a short and sharp method.

Mme. d'Aiglemont had lost her mother in her early childhood, and, as a natural consequence in her bringing-up, she had felt the influences of the relaxed notions which loosened the

hold of religion upon France during the Revolution. Piety is a womanly virtue which women alone can really instill; and the marquise, a child of the eighteenth century, had adopted her father's creed of philosophism and practiced no religious observances. A priest, to her way of thinking, was a civil servant of very doubtful utility. In her present position, the teaching of religion could only poison her wounds; she had, moreover, but scanty faith in the lights of country parsons, and made up her mind to put this one gently but firmly in his place, and to rid herself of him, after the manner of the rich, by bestowing a benefit.

At first sight of the curé the marquise felt no inclination to change her mind. She saw before her a stout, rotund little man, with a ruddy, wrinkled, elderly face, which awkwardly and unsuccessfully tried to smile. His bald, quadrant-shaped forehead, furrowed by intersecting lines, was too heavy for the rest of his face, which seemed to be dwarfed by it. A fringe of scanty, white hair encircled the back of his head, and almost reached his ears. Yet the priest looked as if by nature he had a genial disposition; his thick lips, his slightly curved nose, his chin which vanished in a double fold of wrinkles—all marked him out as a man who took cheerful views of life.

At first the marquise saw nothing but these salient characteristics, but at the first word she was struck by the sweetness of the speaker's voice. Looking at him more closely, she saw that the eyes under the grizzled eyebrows had shed tears, and his face, turned in profile, wore so sublime an impress of sorrow that the marquise recognized the man in the curé.

"Madame la Marquise, the rich only come within our province when they are in trouble. It is easy to see that the troubles of a young, beautiful, and wealthy married woman, who has lost neither children nor relatives, are caused by wounds whose pangs religion alone can soothe. Your soul is in danger, madame. I am not now speaking of the hereafter

which awaits us. No, I am not in the confessional. But it is my duty, is it not, to open your eyes to your future life here on earth? You will pardon an old man, will you not, for the importunity which has your own happiness for its object?"

"There is no more happiness for me, monsieur. I shall soon be, as you say, in your province; but it will be for ever."

"Nay, madame. You will not die of this pain which lies heavy upon you, and can be read in your face. If you had been destined to die of it, you would not be here at Saint-Lange. A definite regret is not so deadly as hope deferred. I have known others pass through more intolerable and more awful anguish, and yet they live."

The marquise looked incredulous.

"Madame, I know a man whose affliction was so sore that your trouble would seem to you to be light compared with his."

Perhaps the long solitary hours had begun to hang heavily; perhaps in the recesses of the marquise's mind lay the thought that here was a friendly heart to whom she might be able to pour out her troubles. However it was, she gave the rector a questioning glance which could not be mistaken.

"Madame," he continued, "the man of whom I tell you had but three children left of a once large family circle. He lost his parents, his daughter, and his wife, whom he dearly loved. He was left alone at last on the little farm where he had lived so happily for so long. His three sons were in the army, and each of the lads had risen in proportion to his time of service. During the Hundred Days, the oldest went into the Guard with a colonel's commission; the second was a major in the artillery; the youngest a major in a regiment of dragoons. Madame, those three boys loved their father as much as he loved them. If you but knew how careless young fellows grow of home ties when they are carried away by the

current of their own lives, you would realize from this one little thing how warmly they loved the lonely old father, who only lived in and for them—never a week passed without a letter from one of the boys. But, then, he on his side had never been weakly indulgent, to lessen their respect for him; nor unjustly severe, to thwart their affection; nor apt to grudge sacrifices, the thing that estranges children's hearts. He had been more than a father; he had been a brother to them, and their friend.

"At last he went to Paris to bid them good-by before they set out for Belgium; he wished to see that they had good horses and all that they needed. And so they went, and the father returned to his home again. Then the war began. He had letters from Fleurus, and again from Ligny. All went well. Then came the battle of Waterloo, and you know the rest. France was plunged into mourning; every family waited in intense anxiety for news. You may imagine, madame, how the old man waited for tidings, in anxiety that knew nor peace nor rest. He used to read the gazettes; he went to the coach-office every day. One evening he was told that the colonel's servant had come. The man was riding his master's horse—what need was there to ask any questions? —the colonel was dead, cut in two by a shell. Before the evening was out the youngest son's servant arrived—the youngest had died on the eve of the battle. At midnight came a gunner with tidings of the death of the last; upon whom, in those few hours, the poor father had centred all his life. Madame, they all had fallen."

After a pause the good man controlled his feelings, and added gently—

"And their father is still living, madame. He realized that if God had left him on earth, he was bound to live on and suffer on earth; but he took refuge in the sanctuary. What could he be?"

The marquise looked up and saw the curé's face, grown

sublime in its sorrow and resignation, and waited for him to speak. When the words came, tears broke from her.

"A priest, madame; consecrated by his own tears previously shed at the foot of the altar."

Silence prevailed for a little. The marquise and the curé looked out at the foggy landscape, as if they could see the figures of those who were no more.

"Not a priest in a city, but a simple country curé," added he.

"At Saint-Lange?" she said, drying her eyes.

"Yes, madame."

Never had the majesty of grief seemed so great to Julie. The two words sank straight into her heart with the weight of an infinite sorrow. The gentle, sonorous tones troubled her heart. Ah! that full, deep voice, charged with undulated vibration, was the voice of one who had suffered indeed.

"And if I do not die, monsieur, what will become of me?" The marquise spoke almost reverently.

"Have you not a child, madame?"

"Yes," she said stiffly.

The curé gave her a glance such as a doctor gives a patient whose life is in danger. Then he determined to do all that in him lay to combat the evil spirit into whose clutches she had fallen.

"We must live on with our sorrows—you see it yourself, madame—and religion alone offers us real consolation. Will you permit me to come again? to speak to you as a man who can sympathize with every trouble, a man about whom there is nothing very alarming, I think?"

"Yes, monsieur, come back again. Thank you for your thought of me."

"Very well, madame; then I shall return very shortly."

This visit relaxed the tension of soul, as it were; the heavy strain of grief and loneliness had been almost too much for the marquise's strength. The priest's visit had left a soothing

balm in her heart, his words thrilled through her with healing influence. She began to feel something of a prisoner's satisfaction when, after he has had time to feel his utter loneliness and the weight of his chains, he hears a neighbor knocking on the wall, and welcomes the sound which brings a sense of human fellowship. Here was an unhoped-for confidant. But this feeling did not last for long. Soon she sank back into the old bitterness of spirit, saying to herself, as the prisoner might say, that a companion in misfortune could neither lighten her own bondage nor her future.

In the first visit the curé had feared to alarm the susceptibilities of self-absorbed grief, in a second interview he hoped to make some progress toward religion. He came back again two days later, and from the marquise's welcome it was plain that she had looked forward to the visit.

"Well, Madame la Marquise, have you given a little thought to the great mass of human suffering? Have you raised your eyes above our earth and seen the immensity of the universe? the worlds beyond worlds which crush our vanity into insignificance, and with our vanity reduce our sorrows?"

"No, monsieur," she said; "I cannot rise to such heights, our social laws lie too heavily upon me and rend my heart with a too poignant anguish. And laws, perhaps, are less cruel than the usages of the world. Ah! the world!"

"Madame, we must obey both. Law is the doctrine, and custom the practice of society."

"Obey society?" cried the marquise, with an involuntary shudder. "Eh! monsieur, it is the source of all our woes. God laid down no law to make us miserable; but mankind, uniting together in social life, have perverted God's work. Civilization deals harder measure to us women than nature does. Nature imposes upon us physical suffering which you have not alleviated; civilization has developed in us thoughts and feelings which you cheat continually. Nature exterminates the weak; you condemn them to live, and, by so doing,

consign them to a life of misery. The whole weight of the burden of marriage, an institution on which society is based, falls upon us; for the man liberty, duties for the woman. We must give up our whole lives to you, you are only bound to give us a few moments of yours. A man, in fact, makes a choice, while we blindly submit. Oh, monsieur, to you I can speak freely. Marriage, in these days, seems to me to be legalized prostitution. This is the cause of my wretchedness. But among so many miserable creatures so unhappily yoked, I alone am bound to be silent, I alone am to blame for my misery. My marriage was my own doing."

She stopped short, and bitter tears fell in the silence.

"In the depths of my wretchedness, in the midst of this sea of distress," she went on, "I found some sands on which to set foot and suffer at leisure. A great tempest swept everything away. And here am I, helpless and alone, too weak to cope with storms."

"We are never weak while God is with us," said the priest. "And if your cravings for affection cannot be satisfied here on earth, have you no duties to perform?"

"Duties continually!" she exclaimed, with something of impatience in her tone. "But where for me are the sentiments which give us strength to perform them? Nothing from nothing, nothing for nothing—this, monsieur, is one of the most inexorable laws of nature, physical or spiritual. Would you have these trees break into leaf without the sap which swells the buds? It is the same with our human nature; and in me the sap is dried up at its source."

"I am not going to speak to you of religious sentiments of which resignation is born," said the rector, "but of motherhood, madame, surely——"

"Stop, monsieur!" said the marquise, "with you I will be sincere. Alas! in future I can be sincere with no one; I am condemned to falsehood. The world requires continual grimaces, and we are bidden to obey its conventions if we

would escape reproach. There are two kinds of motherhood, monsieur; once I knew nothing of such distinctions, but I know them now. Only half of me has become a mother; it were better for me if I had not been a mother at all. Helene is not *his* child! Oh! do not start. At Saint-Lange there are volcanic depths whence come lurid gleams of light and earthquake shocks to shake the fragile edifices of laws not based on nature. I have borne a child, that is enough, I am a mother in the eye of the law. But you, monsieur, with your delicately compassionate soul, can perhaps understand this cry from an unhappy woman who has suffered no lying illusions to enter her heart. God will judge me, but surely I have only obeyed His laws by giving way to the affections which He Himself set in me, and this I have learned from my own soul. What is a child, monsieur, but the image of two beings, the fruit of two sentiments spontaneously blended? Unless it is owned by every fibre of the body, as by every chord of tenderness in the heart; unless it recalls the bliss of love, the hours, the places where two creatures were happy, their words that overflowed with the music of humanity, and their sweet imaginings, that child is an incomplete creation. Yes, those two should find the poetic dreams of their intimate double life realized in their child as in an exquisite miniature; it should be for them a never-failing spring of emotion, implying their whole past and their whole future.

"My poor little Helene is her father's child, the offspring of duty and of chance. In me she finds nothing but the affection of instinct, the woman's natural compassion for the child of her womb. Socially speaking, I am above reproach. Have I not sacrificed my life and my happiness to my child? Her cries go to my heart; if she were to fall into the water, I should spring to save her, but she is not in my heart.

"Ah! love set me dreaming of a motherhood far greater and more complete. In a vanished dream I held in my arms a child conceived in desire before it was begotten, the ex-

quisite flower of life that blossoms in the soul before it sees the light of day. I am Helene's mother only in the sense that I brought her forth. When she needs me no longer, there will be an end of my motherhood; with the extinction of the cause, the effects will cease. If it is a woman's adorable prerogative that her motherhood may last through her child's life, surely that divine persistence of sentiment is due to the far-reaching glory of the conception of the soul? Unless a child has lain wrapped about from life's first beginnings by the mother's soul, the instinct of motherhood dies in her as in the animals. This is true; I feel that it is true. As my poor little one grows older, my heart closes. My sacrifices have driven us apart. And yet I know, monsieur, that to another child my heart would have gone out in inexhaustible love; for that other I should not have known what sacrifice meant, all had been delight. In this, monsieur, my instincts are stronger than reason, stronger than religion or all else in me. Does the woman who is neither wife nor mother sin in wishing to die when, for her misfortune, she has caught a glimpse of the infinite beauty of love, the limitless joy of motherhood? What can become of her? *I* can tell you what she feels. I cannot put that memory from me so resolutely but that a hundred times, night and day, visions of a happiness, greater it may be than the reality, rise before me, followed by a shudder which shakes brain and heart and body. Before these cruel visions, my feelings and thoughts grow colorless, and I ask myself: 'What would my life have been *if*——?'"

She hid her face in her hands and burst into tears.

"There you see the depths of my heart!" she continued. "For *his* child I could have acquiesced in any lot however dreadful. He who died, bearing the burden of the sins of the world, will forgive this thought of which I am dying; but the world, I know, is merciless. In its ears my words are blasphemies; I am outraging all its codes. Oh! that I could wage war against this world and break down and refashion its laws

and traditions! Has it not turned all my thoughts, and feelings, and longings, and hopes, and every fibre in me into so many sources of pain? Spoiled my future, present and past? For me the daylight is full of gloom, my thoughts pierce me like a sword, my child is and is not.

"Oh, when Helene speaks to me, I wish that her voice were different, when she looks into my face I wish that she had other eyes. She constantly keeps me in mind of all that should have been and is not. I cannot bear to have her near me. I smile at her, I try to make up to her for the real affection of which she is defrauded. I am wretched, monsieur, too wretched to live. And I am supposed to be a pattern wife. And I have committed no sins. And I am respected! I have fought down forbidden love which sprang up unaware within me; but if I have kept the letter of the law, have I kept it in my heart? There has never been but one here," she said, laying her right hand on her breast, "one and no other; and my child feels it. Certain looks and tones and gestures mould a child's nature, and my poor little one feels no thrill in the arm I put about her, no tremor comes into my voice, no softness into my eyes when I speak to her or take her up. She looks at me, and I cannot endure the reproach in her eyes. There are times when I shudder to think that some day she may be my judge and condemn her mother unheard. Heaven grant that hate may not grow up between us! Ah! God in heaven, rather let the tomb open for me, rather let me end my days here at Saint-Lange! I want to go back to the world where I shall find my other soul and become wholly a mother. Ah! forgive me, sir, I am mad. Those words were choking me; now they are spoken. Ah! you are weeping too! You will not despise me——"

She heard the child come in from a walk. "Helene, Helene, my child, come here!" she called. The words sounded like a cry of despair.

The little girl ran in, laughing and calling to her mother to

see a butterfly which she had caught; but at the sight of that mother's tears she grew quiet of a sudden, and went up close, and received a kiss on her forehead.

"She will be very beautiful some day," said the priest.

"She is her father's child," said the marquise, kissing the little one with eager warmth, as if she meant to pay a debt of affection or to extinguish some feeling of remorse.

"How hot you are, mamma!"

"There, go away, my angel," said the marquise.

The child went. She did not seem at all sorry to go; she did not look back; glad perhaps to escape from a sad face, and instinctively comprehending already an antagonism of feeling in its expression. A mother's love finds language in smiles; they are a part of the divine right of motherhood. The marquise could not smile. She flushed red as she felt the curé's eyes. She had hoped to act a mother's part before him, but neither she nor her child could deceive him. And, indeed, when a woman loves sincerely, in the kiss she gives there is a divine honey; it is as if a soul were breathed forth in the caress, a subtle flame of fire which brings warmth to the heart; the kiss that lacks this delicious unction is meagre and formal. The priest had felt the difference. He could fathom the depths that lie between the motherhood of the flesh and the motherhood of the heart. He gave the marquise a keen, scrutinizing glance, then he said—

"You are right, madame; it would be better for you if you were dead——"

"Ah!" she cried, "then you know all my misery; I see you do if, Christian priest as you are, you can guess my determination to die and sanction it. Yes, I meant to die, but I have lacked the courage. The spirit was strong, but the flesh was weak, and when my hand did not tremble, the spirit within me wavered.

"I do not know the reason of these inner struggles and alternations. I am very pitiably a woman, no doubt, weak in

my will, strong only to love. Oh, I despise myself. At night, when all my household was asleep, I would go out bravely as far as the lake; but when I stood on the brink my cowardice shrank from self-destruction. To you I will confess my weakness. When I lay in my bed again, shame would come over me and courage would come back. Once I took a dose of laudanum; I was ill, but I did not die. I thought I had emptied the phial, but I had only taken half the dose."

"You are lost, madame," the curé said gravely, with tears in his voice. "You will go back into the world, and you will deceive the world. You will seek and find a compensation (as you imagine it to be) for your woes; then will come a day of reckoning for your pleasures——"

"Do you think," she cried, "that I shall bestow the last, the most precious treasures of my heart upon the first base impostor who can play the comedy of passion? That I would pollute my life for a moment of doubtful pleasure? No; the flame which shall consume my soul shall be love, and nothing but love. All men, monsieur, have the senses of their sex, but not all have the man's soul which satisfies all the requirements of our nature, drawing out the melodious harmony which never breaks forth save in response to the pressure of feeling. Such a soul is not found twice in our lifetime. The future that lies before me is hideous; I know it. A woman is nothing without love; beauty is nothing without pleasure. And even if happiness were offered to me a second time, would not the world frown upon it? I owe my daughter an honored mother. Oh! I am condemned to live in an iron circle, from which there is but one shameful way of escape. The round of family duties, a thankless and irksome task, is in store for me. I shall curse life; but my child shall have at least a fair semblance of a mother. I will give her treasures of virtue for the treasures of love of which I defraud her.

"I have not even the mother's desire to live to enjoy her child's happiness. I have no belief in happiness. What will

Helene's fate be? My own, beyond doubt. How can a mother insure that the man to whom she gives her daughter will be the husband of her heart? You pour scorn on the miserable creatures who sell themselves for a few coins to any passer-by, though want and hunger absolve the brief union; while another union, horrible for quite other reasons, is tolerated, nay, encouraged, by society, and a young and innocent girl is married to a man whom she has only met occasionally during the previous three months. She is sold for her whole lifetime. It is true that the price is high! If you allow her no compensation for her sorrows, you might at least respect her; but no, the most virtuous of women cannot escape calumny. This is our fate in its double aspect. Open prostitution and shame; secret prostitution and unhappiness. As for the poor, portionless girls, they may die or go mad, without a soul to pity them. Beauty aud virtue are not marketable in the bazaar where souls and bodies are bought and sold—in the den of selfishness which you call society. Why not disinherit daughters? Then, at least, you might fulfill one of the laws of nature, and, guided by your own inclinations, choose your companions."

"Madame, from your talk it is clear to me that neither the spirit of family nor the sense of religion appeals to you. Why should you hesitate between the claims of the social selfishness which irritates you and the purely personal selfishness which craves satisfactions——"

"The family, monsieur—does such a thing exist? I decline to recognize as a family a knot of individuals bidden by society to divide the property after the death of father and mother, and to go their separate ways. A family means a temporary association of persons brought together by no will of their own, dissolved at once by death. Our laws have broken up homes and estates, and the old family tradition handed down from generation to generation. I see nothing but wreck and ruin about me."

"Madame, you will only return to God when His hand has been heavy upon you, and I pray that you have time enough given to you in which to make your peace with Him. Instead of looking to heaven for comfort, you are fixing your eyes on earth. Philosophism and personal interest have invaded your heart; like the children of the skeptical eighteenth century, you are deaf to the voice of religion. The pleasures of this life bring nothing but misery. You are about to make an exchange of sorrows, that is all."

She smiled bitterly.

"I will falsify your predictions," she said. "I shall be faithful to him who died for me."

"Sorrow," he answered, "is not likely to live long save in souls disciplined by religion," and he lowered his eyes respectfully lest the marquise should read his doubts in them. The energy of her outburst had grieved him. He had seen the self that lurked beneath so many forms, and despaired of softening a heart which affliction seemed to sear. The divine Sower's seed could not take root in such a soil, and His gentle voice was drowned by the clamorous outcry of self-pity. Yet the good man returned again and again with an apostle's earnest persistence, brought back by a hope of leading so noble and proud a soul to God; until the day when he made the discovery that the marquise only cared to talk with him because it was sweet to speak of him who was no more. He would not lower his ministry by condoning her passion, and confined the conversation more and more to generalities and commonplaces.

Spring came, and with the spring the marquise found distraction from her deep melancholy. She busied herself for lack of other occupation with her estate, making improvements for amusement.

In October she left the old castle. In the life of leisure at Saint-Lange she had recovered from her grief and grown fair and fresh. Her grief had been violent at first in its course,

as the quoit hurled forth with all the player's strength, and like the quoit after many oscillations, each feebler than the last, it had slackened into melancholy. Melancholy is made up of a succession of such oscillations, the first touching upon despair, the last on the border between pain and pleasure; in youth, it is the twilight of dawn; in age, the dusk of night.

As the marquise drove through the village in her traveling carriage, she met the priest on his way back from the church. She bowed in response to his farewell greeting, but it was with lowered eyes and averted face. She did not wish to see him again. The village rector had judged this poor Diana of Ephesus only too well.

III.

AT THIRTY YEARS.

Madame Firmiani was giving a ball. M. Charles de Vandenesse, a young man of great promise, the bearer of one of those historic names which, in spite of the efforts of legislation, are always associated with the glory of France, had received letters of introduction to some of the great lady's friends in Naples, and had come to thank the hostess and to take his leave.

Vandenesse had already acquitted himself creditably on several diplomatic missions; and now that he had received an appointment as attaché to a plenipotentiary at the Congress of Laybach, he wished to take advantage of the opportunity to make some study of Italy on the way. This ball was a sort of farewell to Paris and its amusements and its rapid whirl of life, to the great eddying intellectual centre and maelstrom of pleasure; and a pleasant thing it is to be borne along by the current of this sufficiently slandered great city of Paris. Yet Charles de Vandenesse had little to regret, accustomed as he had been for the past three years to salute European capitals and turn his back upon them at the capricious bidding of a diplomatist's destiny. Women no longer made any impression upon him; perhaps he thought that a real passion would play too large a part in a diplomatist's life; or perhaps that the paltry amusements of frivolity were too empty for a man of strong character. We all of us have huge claims to strength of character. There is no man in France, be he never so ordinary a member of the rank and file of humanity, that will waive pretensions to something beyond mere cleverness.

Charles, young though he was—he was scarcely turned

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thirty—looked at life with a philosophic mind, concerning himself with theories and means and ends, while other men of his age were thinking of pleasure, sentiments, and the like illusions. He forced back into some inner depth the generosity and enthusiasms of youth, and by nature he was generous. He tried hard to be cool and calculating, to coin the fund of wealth which chanced to be in his nature into gracious manners, and courtesy, and attractive arts; 'tis the proper task of an ambitious man to play a sorry part to gain "a good position," as we call it in modern days.

He had been dancing, and now he gave a farewell glance over the rooms, to carry away a distinct impression of the ball, moved, doubtless, to some extent by the feeling which prompts a theatre-goer to stay in his box to see the final tableau before the curtain falls. But M. de Vandenesse had another reason for his survey. He gazed curiously at the scene before him, so French in character and in movement, seeking to carry away a picture of the light and laughter and the faces at this Parisian fête, to compare with novel faces and picturesque surroundings awaiting him at Naples, where he meant to spend a few days before presenting himself at his post. He seemed to be drawing the comparsion now between this France so variable, changing even as you study her, with the manners and aspects of that other land known to him as yet only by contradictory hearsay tales or books of travel, for the most part unsatisfactory. Thoughts of a somewhat poetical cast, albeit hackneyed and trite to our modern ideas, crossed his brain, in response to some longing of which, perhaps, he himself was hardly conscious, a desire in the depths of a heart fastidious rather than jaded, vacant rather than seared.

"These are the wealthiest and most fashionable women and the greatest ladies in Paris," he said to himself. "These are the great men of the day, great orators and men of letters, great names and titles; artists and men in power; and yet in it all it seems to me as if there were nothing but petty in-

trigues and still-born loves, meaningless smiles and causeless scorn, eyes lighted by no flame within, brain-power in abundance running aimlessly to waste. All those pink-and-white faces are here not so much for enjoyment, as to escape from dullness. None of the emotion is genuine. If you ask for nothing but court feathers properly adjusted, fresh gauzes and pretty toilets and fragile, fair women, if you desire simply to skim the surface of life, here is your world for you. Be content with meaningless phrases and fascinating simpers, and do not ask for real feeling. For my own part, I abhor the stale intrigues which end in sub-prefectures and receiver-generals' places and marriages; or, if love comes into the question, in stealthy compromises, so ashamed are we of the mere semblance of passion. Not a single one of all these eloquent faces tells you of a soul, a soul wholly absorbed by one idea as by remorse. Regrets and misfortune go about shamefacedly clad in jests. There is not one woman here whose resistance I should care to overcome, not one who could drag you down to the pit. Where will you find energy in Paris? A poniard here is a curious toy to hang from a gilt nail, in a picturesque sheath to match. The women, the brains, and hearts of Paris are all on a par. There is no passion left, because we have no individuality. High birth and intellect and fortune are all reduced to one level; we have all taken to the uniform black coat by way of mourning for a dead France. There is no love between equals. Between two lovers there should be differences to efface, wide gulfs to fill. The charm of love fled from us in 1789. Our dullness and our humdrum lives are the outcome of the political system. Italy, at any rate, is the land of sharp contrasts. Woman there is a malevolent animal, a dangerous unreasoning siren, guided only by her tastes and appetites, a creature no more to be trusted than a tiger——"

Mme. Firmiani here came up to interrupt this soliloquy made up of vague, conflicting, and fragmentary thoughts

which cannot be reproduced in words. The whole charm of such musing lies in its vagueness—what is it but a sort of mental haze?

"I want to introduce you to some one who has the greatest wish to make your acquaintance, after all that she has heard of you," said the lady, taking his arm.

She brought him into the next room, and, with such a smile and glance as a Parisienne alone can give, she indicated a woman sitting by the hearth.

"Who is she?" the Comte de Vandenesse asked quickly.

"You have heard her name more than once coupled with praise or blame. She is a woman who lives in seclusion—a perfect mystery."

"Oh! if ever you have been merciful in your life, for pity's sake, tell me her name."

"She is the Marquise d'Aiglemont."

"I will take lessons from her; she has managed to make a peer of France of that eminently ordinary person her husband, and a dullard into a power in the land. But, pray tell me this, did Lord Grenville die for her sake, do you think, as some women say?"

"Possibly. Since that adventure, real or imaginary, she is very much changed, poor thing! She has not gone into society since. Four years of constancy—that is something in Paris. If she is here to-night——" Here Mme. Firmiani broke off, adding with a mysterious expression, "I am forgetting that I must say nothing. Go and talk with her."

For a moment Charles stood motionless, leaning lightly against the frame of the doorway, wholly absorbed in his scrutiny of a woman who had become famous no one knew exactly how or why. Such curious anomalies are frequent enough in the world. Mme. d'Aiglemont's reputation was certainly no more extraordinary than plenty of other great reputations. There are men who are always in travail of some great work which never sees the light, statisticians held to be

profound on the score of calculations which they take very good care not to publish, politicians who live on a newspaper article, men of letters and artists whose performances are never given to the world, men of science who pass current among those who know nothing of science, much as Sganarelle is a Latinist for those who know no Latin; there are the men who are allowed by general consent to possess a peculiar capacity for some one thing, be it for the direction of arts, or for the conduct of an important mission. The admirable phrase, "A man with a special subject," might have been invented on purpose for these acephalous species in the domain of literature and politics.

Charles gazed longer than he intended. He was vexed with himself for feeling so strongly interested; it is true, however, that the lady's appearance was a refutation of the young man's ballroom generalizations.

The marquise had reached her thirtieth year. She was beautiful in spite of her fragile form and extremely delicate look. Her greatest charm lay in her still face, revealing unfathomed depths of soul. Some haunting, ever-present thought veiled, as it were, the full brilliance of eyes which told of a fevered life and boundless resignation. So seldom did she raise the eyelids soberly downcast, and so listless were her glances, that it almost seemed as if the fire in her eyes were reserved for some occult contemplation. Any man of genius and feeling must have felt strangely attracted by her gentleness and silence. If the mind sought to explain the mysterious problem of a constant inward turning from the present to the past, the soul was no less interested in initiating itself into the secrets of a heart proud in some sort of its anguish. Everything about her, moreover, was in keeping with these thoughts which she inspired. Like almost all women who have very long hair, she was very pale and perfectly white. The marvelous fineness of her skin (that almost unerring sign) indicated a quick sensibility which could be seen yet more

unmistakably in her features; there was the same minute and wonderful delicacy of finish in them that the Chinese artist gives to his fantastic figures. Perhaps her neck was rather too long, but such necks belong to the most graceful type, and suggest vague affinities between a woman's head and the magnetic curves of the serpent. Leave not a single one of the thousand signs and tokens by which the most inscrutable character betrays itself to an observer of human nature, he has but to watch carefully the little movements of a woman's head, the ever-varying expressive turns and curves of her neck and throat, to read her nature.

Mme. d'Aiglemont's dress harmonized with the haunting thought that informed the whole woman. Her hair was gathered up into a tall coronet of broad plaits, without ornament of any kind; she seemed to have bidden farewell for ever to elaborate toilettes. Nor were any of the small arts of coquetry which spoil so many women to be detected in her. Perhaps her bodice, modest though it was, did not altogether conceal the dainty grace of her figure; perhaps, too, her gown looked rich from the extreme distinction of its fashion; and if it is permissible to look for expression in the arrangement of stuffs, surely those numerous straight folds invested her with a great dignity. There may have been some lingering trace of the indelible feminine foible in the minute care bestowed upon her hand and foot; yet, if she allowed them to be seen with some pleasure, it would have tasked the utmost malice of a rival to discover any affectation in her gestures, so natural did they seem, so much a part of old childish habit, that her careless grace absolved this vestige of vanity.

All these little characteristics, the nameless trifles which combine to make up the sum of a woman's prettiness or ugliness, her charm or lack of charm, can only be indicated, when, as with Mme. d'Aiglemont, a personality dominates and gives coherence to the details, informing them, blending them all in an exquisite whole. Her manner was perfectly in

accord with her style of beauty and her dress. Only to certain women at a certain age is it given to put language into their attitude. Is it joy or is it sorrow that teaches a woman of thirty the secret of that eloquence of carriage, so that she must always remain an enigma which each interprets by the aid of his hopes, desires, or theories?

The way in which the marquise leaned both elbows on the arm of her chair, the toying of her interclasped fingers, the curve of her throat, the indolent lines of her languid but lissome body as she lay back in graceful exhaustion, as it were; her indolent limbs, her unstudied pose, the utter lassitude of her movements, all suggested that this was a woman for whom life had lost its interest, a woman who had known the joys of love only in dreams, a woman bowed down by the burden of memories of the past, a woman who had long since despaired of the future and despaired of herself, an unoccupied woman who took the emptiness of her own life for the nothingness of life.

Charles de Vandenesse saw and admired the beautiful picture before him, as a kind of artistic success beyond an ordinary woman's powers of attainment. He was acquainted with d'Aiglemont; and now, at the first sight of d'Aiglemont's wife, the young diplomatist saw at a glance a disproportionate marriage, an incompatibility (to use the legal jargon) so great that it was impossible that the marquise should love her husband. And yet—the Marquise d'Aiglemont's life was above reproach, and for any observer the mystery about her was the more interesting on this account. The first impulse of surprise over, Vandenesse cast about for the best way of approaching Mme. d'Aiglemont. He would try a commonplace piece of diplomacy, he thought; he would disconcert her by a piece of clumsiness and see how she would receive it.

"Madame," he said, seating himself near her, "through a fortunate indiscretion I have learned that, for some reason unknown to me, I have had the good fortune to attract your

notice. I owe you the more thanks because I have never been so honored before. At the same time, you are responsible for one of my faults, for I mean never to be modest again——"

"You will make a mistake, monsieur," she laughed; "vanity should be left to those who have nothing else to recommend them."

The conversation thus opened ranged at large, in the usual way, over a multitude of topics—art and literature, politics, men and things—till insensibly they fell to talking of the eternal theme in France and all the world over—love, sentiment, and women.

"We are bond-slaves."

"You are queens."

This was the gist and substance of all the more or less ingenuous discourse between Charles and the marquise, as of all such discourses—past, present, and to come. Allow a certain space of time, and the two formulas shall begin to mean "Love me," and "I will love you."

"Madame," Charles de Vandenesse exclaimed under his breath, "you have made me bitterly regret that I am leaving Paris. In Italy I certainly shall not pass hours in intellectual enjoyment such as this has been."

"Perhaps, monsieur, you will find happiness, and happiness is worth more than all the brilliant things, true and false, that are said every evening in Paris."

Before Charles took leave, he asked permission to pay a farewell call on the Marquise d'Aiglemont, and very lucky did he feel himself when the form of words in which he expressed himself for once was used in all sincerity; and that night, and all day long on the morrow, he could not put the thought of the marquise out of his mind.

At times he wondered why she had singled him out, what she had meant when she asked him to come to see her, and thought supplied an inexhaustible commentary. Again it

seemed to him that he had discovered the motives of her curiosity, and he grew intoxicated with hope or frigidly sober with each new construction put upon that piece of commonplace civility. Sometimes it meant everything, sometimes nothing. He made up his mind at last that he would not yield to this inclination, and—went to call on Mme. d' Aiglemont.

There are thoughts which determine our conduct, while we do not so much as suspect their existence. If at first sight this assertion appears to be less a truth than a paradox, let any candid inquirer look into his own life and he shall find abundant confirmation therein. Charles went to Mme. d'Aiglemont, and so obeyed one of these latent, preëxistent germs of thought, of which our experience and our intellectual gains and achievements are but later and tangible developments.

For a young man a woman of thirty has irresistible attractions. There is nothing more natural, nothing better established, no human tie of stouter tissue than the heart-deep attachment between such a woman as the Marquise d'Aiglemont and such a man as Charles de Vandenesse. You can see examples of it every day in the world. A girl, as a matter of fact, has too many young illusions, she is too inexperienced, the instinct of sex counts for too much in her love for a young man to feel flattered by it. A woman of thirty knows all that is involved in the self-surrender to be made. Among the impulses of the first, put curiosity and other motives than love; the second acts with integrity of sentiment. The first yields; the second makes deliberate choice. Is not that choice in itself an immense flattery? A woman armed with experience, forewarned by knowledge, almost always dearly bought, seems to give more than herself; while the inexperienced and credulous girl, unable to draw comparisons for lack of knowledge, can appreciate nothing at its just worth. She accepts love and ponders it. A woman is a counselor and a guide at an age

when we love to be guided and obedience is delight; while a girl would fain learn all things, meeting us with a girl's *naïveté* instead of a woman's tenderness. She affords a single triumph: with a woman there is resistance upon resistance to overcome; she has but joy and tears, a woman has rapture and remorse.

A girl cannot play the part of a mistress unless she is so corrupt that we turn from her with loathing; a woman has a thousand ways of preserving her power and her dignity; she has risked so much for love that she must bid him pass through his myriad transformations, while her too submissive rival gives a sense of too serene security which palls. If the one sacrifices her maidenly pride, the other immolates the honor of a whole family. A girl's coquetry is of the simplest, she thinks that all is said when the veil is laid aside; a woman's coquetry is endless, she shrouds herself in veil after veil, she satisfies every demand of man's vanity, the novice responds but to one.

And there are terrors, fears, and hesitations—trouble and storm in the love of a woman of thirty years, never to be found in a young girl's love. At thirty years a woman asks her lover to give her back the esteem she has forfeited for his sake; she lives only for him, her thoughts are full of his future, he must have a great career, she bids him make it glorious; she can obey, entreat, command, humble herself, or rise in pride; times without number she brings comfort when a young girl can only make moan. And with all the advantages of her position, the woman of thirty can be a girl again, for she can play all parts, assume a girl's bashfulness, and grow the fairer even for a mischance.

Between these two feminine types lies the immeasurable difference which separates the foreseen from the unforeseen, strength from weakness. The woman of thirty satisfies every requirement; the young girl must satisfy none, under penalty of ceasing to be a young girl. Such ideas as these, developing

in a young man's mind, help to strengthen the strongest of all passions, a passion in which all spontaneous and natural feeling is blended with the artificial sentiment created by conventional manners.

The most important and decisive step in a woman's life is the very one that she invariably regards as the most insignificant. After her marriage she is no longer her own mistress, she is the queen and the bond-slave of the domestic hearth. The sanctity of womanhood is incompatible with social liberty and social claims; and for a woman emancipation means corruption. If you give a stranger the right of entry into the sanctuary of home, do you not put yourself at his mercy? How then if she herself bids him enter? Is not this an offense, or, to speak more accurately, a first step toward an offense? You must either accept this theory with all its consequences, or absolve illicit passion. French society hitherto has chosen the third and middle course of looking on and laughing when offenses come, apparently upon the Spartan principle of condoning the theft and punishing clumsiness. And this system, it may be, is a very wise one. 'Tis a most appalling punishment to have all your neighbors pointing the finger of scorn at you, a punishment that a woman feels in her very heart. Women are tenacious, and all of them should be tenacious of respect; without esteem they cannot exist, esteem is the first demand that they make of love. The most corrupt among them feels that she must, in the first place, pledge the future to buy absolution for the past, and strives to make her lover understand that only for irresistible bliss can she barter the respect which the world will henceforth absolutely refuse to her.

Some such reflections cross the mind of any woman who for the first time and alone receives a visit from a young man; and this especially when, like Charles de Vandenesse, the visitor is handsome or clever. And similarly there are not many young men who would fail to base some secret wish on

one of the thousand and one ideas which justify the instinct that attracts them to a beautiful, witty, and unhappy woman like the Marquise d'Aiglemont.

Mme. d'Aiglemont, therefore, felt troubled when M. de Vandenesse was announced; and, as for him, he was almost confused in spite of the assurance which is like a matter of costume for a diplomatist. But not for long. The marquise took refuge at once in the friendliness of manner which women use as a defense against the misinterpretations of fatuity, a manner which admits of no afterthought, while it paves the way to sentiment (to make use of a figure of speech), tempering the transition through the ordinary forms of politeness. In this ambiguous position, where the four roads leading respectively to Indifference, Respect, Wonder, and Passion meet, a woman may stay as long as she pleases, but only at thirty years does she understand all the possibilities of the situation. Laughter, tenderness, and jest are all permitted to her at the crossing of the ways; she has acquired the tact by which she finds all the responsive chords in a man's nature, and skill in judging the sounds which she draws forth. Her silence is as dangerous as her speech. You will never read her at that age, nor discover if she is frank or false, nor how far she is serious in her admissions or merely laughing at you. She gives you the right to engage in a game of fence with her, and suddenly by a glance, a gesture of proved potency, she closes the combat and turns from you with your secret in her keeping, free to offer you up to a jest, free to interest herself in you, safe alike in her weakness and your strength.

Although the Marquise d'Aiglemont took up her position upon this neutral ground during the first interview, she knew how to preserve a high womanly dignity. The sorrows of which she never spoke seemed to hang over her assumed gayety like a light cloud obscuring the sun. When Vandenesse went out, after a conversation which he had enjoyed more than he had thought possible, he carried with him the

conviction that this was like to be too costly a conquest for his aspirations.

"It would mean sentiment from here to yonder," he thought, "and correspondence enough to wear out a deputy second-clerk on his promotion. And yet if I really cared——"

Luckless phrase that has been the ruin of many an infatuated mortal. In France the way to love lies through self-love. Charles went back to Mme. d'Aiglemont, and imagined that she showed symptoms of pleasure in his conversation. And then, instead of giving himself up like a boy to the joy of falling in love, he tried to play a double role. He did his best to act passion and to keep cool enough to analyze the progress of this flirtation, to be lover and diplomatist at once; but youth and hot blood and analysis could only end in one way, over head and ears in love; for, natural or artificial, the marquise was more than his match. Each time as he went out from Mme. d'Aiglemont, he strenuously held himself to his distrust, and submitted the progressive situations of his case to a rigorous scrutiny fatal to his own emotions.

"To-day she gave me to understand that she has been very unhappy and lonely," said he to himself, after the third visit, "and that but for her little girl she would have longed for death. She was perfectly resigned. Now as I am neither her brother nor her spiritual director, why should she confide her troubles to *me?* She loves me."

Two days later he came away apostrophizing modern manners.

"Love takes on the hue of every age. In 1822 love is a doctrinaire. Instead of proving love by deeds, as in times past, we have taken to argument and rhetoric and debate. Women's tactics are reduced to three shifts. In the first place, they declare that we cannot love as they love. (Coquetry! the marquise simply threw it at me, like a challenge, this evening!) Next they grow pathetic, to appeal to our natural generosity or self-love; for does it not flatter a young

man's vanity to console a woman for a great calamity. And, lastly, they have a craze for virginity. She must have thought that I thought her very innocent. My good faith is like to become an excellent speculation."

But a day came when every suspicious idea was exhausted. He asked himself whether the marquise was not sincere; whether so much suffering could be feigned, and why she should act the part of resignation? She lived in complete seclusion; she drank in silence of a cup of sorrow scarcely to be guessed unless from the accent of some chance exclamation in a voice always well under control. From that moment Charles felt a keen interest in Mme. d'Aiglemont. And yet, though his visits had come to be a recognized thing, and in some sort a necessity to them both, and though the hour was kept free by tacit agreement, Vandenesse still thought that this woman with whom he was in love was more clever than sincere. "Decidedly, she is an uncommonly clever woman," he used to say to himself as he went away.

When he came into the room, there was the marquise in her favorite attitude, melancholy expressed in her whole form. She made no movement when he entered, only raised her eyes and looked full at him, but the glance that she gave him was like a smile. Mme. d'Aiglemont's manner meant confidence and sincere friendship, but of love there was no trace. Charles sat down and found nothing to say. A sensation for which no language exists troubled him.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked in a softened voice.

"Nothing. Yes; I am thinking of something of which, as yet, you have not thought at all."

"What is it?"

"Why—the Congress is over."

"Well," she said, "and ought you to have been at the Congress?"

A direct answer would have been the most eloquent and

delicate declaration of love; but Charles did not make it. Before the candid friendship in Mme. d'Aiglemont's face all the calculations of vanity, the hopes of love, and the diplomatist's doubts died away. She did not suspect, or she seemed not to suspect, his love for her; and Charles, in utter confusion turning upon himself, was forced to admit that he had said and done nothing which could warrant such a belief on her part. For M. de Vandenesse that evening, the marquise was, as she had always been, simple and friendly, sincere in her sorrow, glad to have a friend, proud to find a nature responsive to her own—nothing more. It had not entered her mind that a woman could yield twice; she had known love—love still lay bleeding in the depths of her heart, but she did not imagine that bliss could bring her its rapture twice, for she believed not merely in the intellect, but in the soul; and for her love was no simple attraction; it drew her with all noble attractions.

In a moment Charles became a young man again, enthralled by the splendor of a nature so lofty. He wished for a fuller initiation into the secret history of a life blighted rather by fate than by her own fault. Mme. d'Aiglemont heard him ask the cause of the overwhelming sorrow which had blended all the harmonies of sadness with her beauty; she gave him one glance, but that searching look was like a seal set upon some solemn compact.

"Ask no more such questions of me," she said. "Four years ago, on this very day, the man who loved me, for whom I would have given up everything, even my own self-respect, died, and died to save my name. That love was still young and pure and full of illusions when it came to an end. Before I gave way to passion—and never was woman so urged by fate—I had been drawn into the mistake that ruins many a girl's life, a marriage with a man whose agreeable manners concealed his emptiness. Marriage plucked my hopes away one by one. And now, to-day, I have forfeited happiness through marriage,

as well as the happiness styled criminal, and I have known no happiness. Nothing is left to me. If I could not die, at the least I ought to be faithful to my memories."

No tears came with the words. Her eyes fell, and there was a slight twisting of the fingers interclasped, according to her wont. It was simply said, but in her voice there was a note of despair, deep as her love seemed to have been, which left Charles without a hope. The dreadful story of a life told in three sentences, with that twisting of the fingers for all comment, the might of anguish in a fragile woman, the dark depths masked by a fair face, the tears of four years of mourning, fascinated Vandenesse; he sat silent and diminished in the presence of her woman's greatness and nobleness, seeing not the physical beauty so exquisite, so perfectly complete, but the soul so great in its power to feel. He had found, at last, the ideal of his fantastic imaginings, the ideal so vigorously invoked by all who look on life as the raw material of a passion for which many a one seeks ardently, and dies before he has grasped the whole of the dreamed-of treasure.

With those words of hers in his ears, in the presence of her sublime beauty, his own thoughts seemed poor and narrow. Powerless as he felt himself to find words of his own, simple enough and lofty enough to scale the heights of this exaltation, he took refuge in platitudes as to the destiny of women.

"Madame, we must either forget our pain or hollow out a tomb for ourselves."

But reason always cuts a poor figure beside sentiment; the one being essentially restricted, like everything that is positive, while the other is infinite. To set to work to reason where you are required to feel is the mark of a limited nature. Vandenesse therefore held his peace, sat awhile with his eyes fixed upon her, then went away. A prey to novel thoughts which exalted woman for him, he was in something the same position as a painter who has taken the vulgar studio model for a type of womanhood, and suddenly confronts the

Mnemosynë of the Museum—that noblest and least appreciated of antique statues.

Charles de Vandenesse was deeply in love. He loved Mme. d'Aiglemont with the loyalty of youth, with the fervor that communicates such ineffable charm to a first passion, with a simplicity of heart of which a man only recovers some fragments when he loves again at a later day. Delicious first passion of youth, almost always deliciously savored by the woman who calls it forth; for at the golden prime of thirty, from the poetic summit of a woman's life, she can look out over the whole course of love—backward into the past, forward into the future—and, knowing all the price to be paid for love, enjoys her bliss with the dread of losing it ever present with her. Her soul is still fair with her waning youth, and passion daily gathers strength from the dismaying prospect of the coming days.

"This is love," Vandenesse said to himself this time as he left the marquise, "and for my misfortune I love a woman wedded to her memories. It is hard work to struggle against a dead rival, never present to make blunders and fall out of favor, nothing of him left but his better qualities. What is it but a sort of high treason against the Ideal to attempt to break the charm of memory, to destroy the hopes that survive a lost lover, precisely because he only awakened longings, and all that is loveliest and most enchanting in love?"

These sober reflections, due to the discouragement and dread of failure with which love begins in earnest, were the last expiring effort of diplomatic reasoning. Thenceforward he knew no afterthoughts, he was the plaything of his love, and lost himself in the nothings of that strange inexplicable happiness which is full fed by a chance word, by silence, or a vague hope. He tried to love Platonically, came daily to breathe the air that she breathed, became almost a part of her house, and went everywhere with her, slave as he was of a tyrannous passion compounded of egoism and devotion of

the completest. Love has its own instinct, finding the way to the heart, as the feeblest insect finds the way to its flower, with a will which nothing can dismay nor turn aside. If feeling is sincere, its destiny is not doubtful. Let a woman begin to think that her life depends on the sincerity or fervor or earnestness which her lover shall put into his longings, and is there not sufficient in the thought to put her through all the tortures of dread? It is impossible for a woman, be she wife or mother, to be secure from a young man's love. One thing it is within her power to do—to refuse to see him as soon as she learns a secret which she never fails to guess. But this is too decided a step to take at an age when marriage has become a prosaic and tiresome yoke, and conjugal affection is something less than tepid (if indeed her husband has not already begun to neglect her). Is a woman plain? She is flattered by a love which gives her fairness. Is she young and charming? She is only to be won by a fascination as great as her own power to charm; that is to say, a fascination well-nigh irresistible. Is she virtuous? There is a love sublime in its earthliness which leads her to find something like absolution in the very greatness of the surrender and glory in a hard struggle. Everything is a snare. No lesson, therefore, is too severe where the temptation is so strong. The seclusion in which the Greeks and Orientals kept and keep their women, an example more and more followed in modern England, is the only safeguard of domestic morality; but under this system there is an end of all the charm of social intercourse; and society, and good breeding, and refinement of manners become impossible. The nations must take their choice.

So a few months went by, and Mme. d'Aiglemont discovered that her life was closely bound with this young man's life, without overmuch confusion in her surprise, and felt with something almost like pleasure that she shared his tastes and his thoughts. Had she adopted Vandenesse's ideas? Or was it Vandenesse who had made her lightest whims his own?

She was not careful to inquire. She had been swept out already into the current of passion, and yet this adorable woman told herself, with the confident reiteration of misgiving—

"Ah! no. I will be faithful to him who died for me."

Pascal said that "the doubt of God implies belief in God." And similarly it may be said that a woman only parleys when she has surrendered. A day came when the marquise admitted to herself that she was loved, and with that admission came a time of wavering among countless conflicting thoughts and feelings. The superstitions of experience spoke their language. Should she be happy? Was it possible that she should find happiness outside the limits of the laws which society rightly or wrongly has set up for humanity to live by? Hitherto her cup of life had been full of bitterness. Was there any happy issue possible for the ties which united two human beings held apart by social conventions? And might not happiness be bought too dear? Still, this so ardently desired happiness, for which it is so natural to seek, might perhaps be found after all. Curiosity is always retained on the lover's side in the suit. The secret tribunal was still sitting when Vandenesse appeared, and his presence put the metaphysical spectre, reason, to flight.

If such are the successive transformations through which a sentiment, transient though it be, passes in a young man and a woman of thirty, there comes a moment of time when the shades of difference blend into each other, when all reasonings end in a single and final reflection which is lost and absorbed in the desire which it confirms. Then the longer the resistance, the mightier the voice of love. And here endeth this lesson, or rather this study made from the *écorché*, to borrow a most graphic term from the studio, for in this history it is not so much intended to portray love as to lay bare its mechanism and its dangers. From this moment every day adds color to these dry bones, clothes them again with living

flesh and blood and the charm of youth, and puts vitality into their movements; till they glow once more with the beauty, the persuasive grace of sentiment, the loveliness of life.

Charles found Mme. d'Aiglemont absorbed in thought, and to his: "What is it?" spoken in thrilling tones grown persuasive with the heart's soft magic, she was careful not to reply. The delicious question bore witness to the perfect unity of their spirits; and the marquise felt, with a woman's wonderful intuition, that to give any expression to the sorrow in her heart would be to make an advance. If, even now, each one of those words was fraught with significance for them both, in what fathomless depths might she not plunge at the first step? She read herself with a clear and lucid glance. She was silent, and Vandenesse followed her example.

"I am not feeling well," she said at last, taking alarm at the pause fraught with such great moment for them both, when the language of the eyes completely filled the blank left by the helplessness of speech.

"Madame," said Charles, and his voice was tender but unsteady with strong feeling, "soul and body are both dependent on each other. If you were happy, you would be young and fresh. Why do you refuse to ask of love all that love has taken from you? You think that your life is over when it is only just beginning. Trust yourself to a friend's care. It is so sweet to be loved."

"I am old already," she said; "there is no reason why I should not continue to suffer as in the past. And 'one must love,' do you say? Well, I must not, and I cannot. Your friendship has put some sweetness into my life, but beside you I care for no one, no one could efface my memories. A friend I accept; I should fly from a lover. Beside, would it be a very generous thing to do, to exchange a withered heart for a young heart; to smile upon illusions which now I cannot share, to cause happiness in which I should either have no

belief, or tremble to lose? I should perhaps respond to his devotion with egoism, should weigh and deliberate while he felt; my memory would resent the poignancy of his happiness. No, if you love once, that love is never replaced, you see. Indeed, who would have my heart at this price?"

There was a tinge of heartless coquetry in the words, the last effort of discretion.

"If he loses courage, well and good, I shall live alone and faithful." The thought came from the very depths of the woman, for her it was the too slender willow twig caught in vain by a swimmer swept out by the current.

Vandenesse's involuntary shudder at her dictum pled more eloquently for him than all his past assiduity. Nothing moves a woman so much as the discovery of a gracious delicacy in us, such a refinement of sentiment as her own, for a woman the grace and delicacy are sure tokens of truth. Charles' start revealed the sincerity of his love. Mme. d'Aiglemont learned the strength of his affection from the intensity of his pain.

"Perhaps you are right," he said coldly. "New love, new vexation of spirit."

Then he changed the subject, and spoke of indifferent matters; but he was visibly moved, and he concentrated his gaze on Mme. d'Aiglemont as if he were seeing her for the last time.

"Adieu, madame," he said, with emotion in his voice.

"*Au revoir*," said she, with that subtle coquetry, the secret of a very few among women.

He made no answer and went.

When Charles was no longer there, when his empty chair spoke for him, regrets flocked in upon her, and she found fault with herself. Passion makes an immense advance as soon as a woman persuades herself that she has failed somewhat in generosity or hurt a noble nature. In love there is never any need to be on our guard against the worst in us; that is a

safeguard; a woman only surrenders at the summons of a virtue. "The floor of hell is paved with good intentions," it is no preacher's paradox.

Vandenesse stopped away for several days. Every evening at the accustomed hour the marquise sat expectant in remorseful impatience. She could not write—that would be a declaration, and, moreover, her instinct told her that he would come back. On the sixth day he was announced, and never had she heard the name with such delight. Her joy frightened her.

"You have punished me well," she said, addressing him.

Vandenesse gazed at her in astonishment.

"Punished!" he echoed. "And for what?" He understood her quite well, but he meant to be avenged for all that he had suffered as soon as she suspected it.

"Why have you not come to see me?" she demanded with a smile.

"Then have you seen no visitors?" asked he, parrying the question.

"Yes. Messieurs de Ronquerolles and de Marsay and young d'Escrignon came and stayed for nearly two hours, the first two yesterday, the last this morning. And, beside, I have had a call, I believe, from Madame Firmiani and from your sister, Madame de Listomère."

Here was a new infliction, torture which none can comprehend unless they know love as a fierce and all-invading tyrant whose mildest symptom is a monstrous jealousy, a perpetual desire to snatch away the beloved from every other influence.

"What!" thought he to himself, "she has seen visitors, she has been with happy creatures, and talking to them, while I was unhappy and all alone!"

He buried his annoyance forthwith, and consigned love to the depths of his heart, like a coffin to the sea. His thoughts were of the kind that never find expression in words; they

pass through the mind swiftly as a deadly acid, that poisons as it evaporates and vanishes. His brow, however, was overclouded; and Mme. d'Aiglemont, guided by her woman's instinct, shared his sadness without understanding it. She had hurt him, unwittingly, as Vandenesse knew. He talked over his position with her, as if his jealousy were one of those hypothetical cases which lovers love to discuss. Then the marquise understood it all. She was so deeply moved that she could not keep back the tears—and so these lovers entered the heaven of love.

Heaven and hell are two great imaginative conceptions formulating our ideas of joy and sorrow—those two poles about which human existence revolves. Is not heaven a figure of speech covering now and for evermore an infinity of human feeling impossible to express save in its accidents—since that joy is one? And what is hell but the symbol of our infinite power to suffer tortures so diverse that of our pain it is possible to fashion works of art, for no two human sorrows are alike?

One evening the two lovers sat alone and side by side, silently watching one of the fairest transformations of the sky, a cloudless heaven taking hues of pale gold and purple from the last rays of the sunset. With the slow fading of the daylight, sweet thoughts seem to awaken, and soft stirrings of passion and a mysterious sense of trouble in the midst of calm. Nature sets before us vague images of bliss, bidding us enjoy the happiness within our reach, or lament it when it has fled. In those moments fraught with enchantment, when the tender light in the canopy of the sky blends in harmony with the spells working within, it is difficult to resist the heart's desires grown so magically potent. Cares are blunted; joy becomes ecstasy; pain, intolerable anguish. The pomp of sunset gives the signal for confessions and draws them forth. Silence grows more dangerous than speech, for it gives to eyes all the power of the infinite of the heavens reflected in them. And

for speech, the least word has irresistible might. Is not the light infused into the voice and purple into the glances? Is not heaven within us, or do we feel that we are in the heavens?

Vandenesse and Julie—for so she had allowed herself to be called for the past few days by him whom she loved to speak of as Charles—Vandenesse and Julie were talking together, but they had drifted very far from their original subject; and if their spoken words had grown meaningless, they listened in delight to the unspoken thoughts that lurked in the sounds. Her hand lay in his. She had abandoned it to him without a thought that she had granted a proof of love.

Together they leaned forward to look out upon a majestic cloud country, full of snows and glaciers and fantastic mountain peaks with gray stains of shadow on their sides, a picture composed of sharp contrasts between fiery red and the shadows of darkness, filling the skies with a fleeting vision of glory which cannot be reproduced—magnificent swaddling-bands of sunrise, bright shrouds of the dying sun. As they leant, Julie's hair brushed lightly against Vandenesse's cheek. She felt that light contact, and shuddered violently, and he even more, for imperceptibly they both had reached one of those inexplicable crises when quiet has wrought upon the senses until every faculty of perception is so keen that the slightest shock fills the heart lost in melancholy with sadness that overflows in tears; or raises joy to ecstasy in a heart that is lost in the vertigo of love. Almost involuntarily Julie pressed her lover's hand. That wooing pressure gave courage to his timidity. All the joy of the present, all the hopes of the future were blended in the emotion of a first caress, the bashful trembling kiss that Mme. d'Aiglemont received upon her cheek. The slighter the concession, the more dangerous and insinuating it was. For their double misfortune it was only too sincere a revelation. Two noble natures had met and blended,* drawn

* Mêleré.

each to each by every law of natural attraction, held apart by every ordinance.

General d'Aiglemont came in at that very moment.

"The Ministry has gone out," he said. "Your uncle will be in the new cabinet. So you stand an uncommonly good chance of an embassy, Vandenesse."

Charles and Julie looked at each other and flushed red. That blush was one more tie to unite them; there was one thought and one remorse in either mind; between two lovers guilty of a kiss there is a bond quite as strong and terrible as the bond between two robbers who have murdered a man. Something had to be said by way of reply.

"I do not care to leave Paris now," Charles said.

"We know why," said the general, with the knowing air of a man who discovers a secret. "You do not like to leave your uncle, because you do not wish to lose your chance of succeeding to the title."

The marquise took refuge in her room, and in her mind passed a pitiless verdict upon her husband.

"His stupidity is really beyond anything!"

IV.

THE FINGER OF GOD.

Between the Barrière d'Italie and the Barrière de la Santé, along the boulevard which leads to the Jardin des Plantes, you have a view of Paris fit to send an artist or the tourist, the most *blasé* in matters of landscape, into ecstasies. Reach the slightly higher ground where the line of boulevard, shaded by tall, thick-spreading trees, curves with the grace of some green and silent forest avenue, and you see spread out at your feet a deep valley populous with factories looking almost countrified among green trees and the brown streams of the Bièvre or the Gobelins.

On the opposite slope, beneath some thousands of roofs packed close together like heads in a crowd, lurks the squalor of the Faubourg Saint-Marceau. The imposing cupola of the Panthéon and the grim melancholy dome of the Val-du-Grace tower proudly up above a whole town in itself, built amphitheatre-wise; every tier being grotesquely represented by a crooked line of street, so that the two public monuments look like a huge pair of giants dwarfing into insignificance the poor little houses and the tallest poplars in the valley. To your left behold the observatory, the daylight, pouring athwart its windows and galleries, producing such fantastical, strange effects that the building looks like a black spectral skeleton. Farther yet in the distance rises the elegant lantern tower of the Invalides, soaring up between the bluish pile of the Luxembourg and the gray towers of Saint-Sulpice. From this standpoint the lines of the architecture are blended with green leaves and gray shadows, and change every moment with every aspect of the heavens, every alteration of light or color in the sky. Afar, the skyey spaces themselves seem to be full of

buildings; near, wind the serpentine curves of waving trees and green footpaths.

Away to your right, through a great gap in this singular landscape, you see the canal Saint-Martin, a long pale stripe with its edging of reddish stone quays and fringes of lime avenues. The long rows of buildings beside it, in genuine Roman style, are the public granaries.

Beyond, again, on the very last plane of all, see the smoke-dimmed slopes of Belleville, covered with houses and windmills, which blend their freaks of outline with the chance effects of clouds. And still, between that horizon, vague as some childish recollection, and the serried range of roofs in the valley, a whole city lies out of sight: a huge city, ingulfed, as it were, in a vast hollow between the pinnacles of the Hôpital de la Pitié and the ridge line of the Cimetière de l'Est, between suffering on the one hand and death on the other; a city sending up a smothered roar like ocean grumbling at the foot of a cliff, as if to let you know that "I am here!"

When the sunlight pours like a flood over this strip of Paris, purifying and etherealizing the outlines, kindling answering lights here and there in the window-panes, brightening the red tiles, flaming about the golden crosses, whitening walls and transforming the atmosphere into a gauzy veil, calling up rich contrasts of light and fantastic shadow; when the sky is blue and earth quivers in the heat, and the bells are pealing, then you shall see one of the eloquent fairy scenes which stamp themselves for ever on the imagination, a scene that shall find as fanatical worshipers as the wondrous views of Naples and Byzantium or the isles of Florida. Nothing is wanting to complete the harmony, the murmur of the world of men and the idyllic quiet of solitude, the voices of a million human creatures and the voice of God. There lies a whole capital beneath the peaceful cypresses of Père-Lachaise cemetery.

The landscape lay in all its beauty, sparkling in the spring

sunlight, as I stood looking out over it one morning, my back against a huge elm-tree that flung its yellow flowers to the wind. And, at the sight of the rich and glorious view before me, I thought bitterly of the scorn with which even in our literature we affect to hold this land of ours, and poured maledictions on the pitiable plutocrats who fall out of love with fair France, and spend their gold to acquire the right of sneering at their own country, by going through Italy at a gallop and inspecting that desecrated land through an opera-glass. I cast loving eyes on modern Paris; I was beginning to dream dreams, when the sound of a kiss disturbed the solitude and put philosophy to flight. Down the sidewalk, along the steep bank, above the rippling water, I saw beyond the Pont des Gobelins the figure of a woman, dressed with the daintiest simplicity; she was still young, as it seemed to me, and the blithe gladness of the landscape was reflected in her sweet face. Her companion, a handsome young man, had just set down a little boy. A prettier child has never been seen, and to this day I do not know whether it was the little one or his mother who received the kiss. In their young faces, in their eyes, their smile, their every movement, you could read the same deep and tender thought. Their arms were interlaced with such glad swiftness; they drew close together with such marvelous unanimity of impulse that, conscious of nothing but themselves, they did not so much as see me. A second child, however—a little girl, who had turned her back upon them in sullen discontent—threw me a glance, and the expression of her eyes startled me. She was as pretty and as engaging as the little brother whom she left to run about by himself, sometimes before, sometimes after their mother and her companion; but her charm was less childless, and now, as she stood mute and motionless, her attitude and demeanor suggested a torpid snake. There was something indescribably mechanical in the way in which the pretty woman and her companion paced up and down. In absence of mind, probably, they were content

to walk to and fro between the little bridge and a carriage that stood waiting near by at a corner in the boulevard, turning, stopping short now and again, looking into each other's eyes, or breaking into laughter as their casual talk grew lively or languid, grave or gay.

I watched this delicious picture a while from my hiding-place by the great elm-tree, and should have turned away no doubt and respected their privacy, if it had not been for a chance discovery. In the face of the brooding, silent, elder child I saw traces of thought over-deep for her age. When her mother and the young man at her side turned and came near, her head was frequently lowered; the furtive sidelong glances of intelligence that she gave the pair and the child her brother were nothing less than extraordinary. Sometimes the pretty woman or her friend would stroke the little boy's fair curls, or lay a caressing finger against the baby throat or the white collar as he played at keeping step with them; and no words can describe the shrewd subtlety, the ingenuous malice, the fierce intensity which lighted up that pallid little face with the faint circles already round the eyes. Truly there was a man's power of passion in that strange-looking, delicate little girl. Here were traces of suffering or of thought in her; and which is the more certain token of death when life is in blossom—physical suffering, or the malady of too early thought preying upon a soul as yet in bud? Perhaps a mother knows. For my own part, I know of nothing more dreadful to see than an old man's thoughts on a child's forehead; even blasphemy from girlish lips is less monstrous.

The almost stupid stolidity of this child who had begun to think already, her rare gestures, everything about her, interested me. I scrutinized her curiously. Then the common whim of the observer drew me to compare her with her brother, and to note their likeness and unlikeness.

Her brown hair and dark eyes and look of precocious power made a rich contrast with the little one's fair curled

head and sea-green eyes and winning helplessness. She, perhaps, was seven or eight years of age; the boy was full four years younger. Both children were dressed alike; but here again, looking closely, I noticed a difference. It was very slight, a little thing enough; but in the light of after-events I saw that it meant a whole romance in the past, a whole tragedy to come. The little brown-haired maid wore a linen collar with a plain hem, her brother's was edged with dainty embroidery, that was all; but therein lay the confession of a heart's secret, a tacit preference which a child can read in the mother's inmost soul as clearly as if the spirit of God revealed it. The fair-haired child, careless and glad, looked almost like a girl, his skin was so fair and fresh, his movements so graceful, his look so sweet; while his older sister, in spite of her energy, in spite of the beauty of her features and her dazzling complexion, looked like a sickly little boy. In her bright eyes there was none of the humid softness which lends such charm to children's faces; they seemed, like courtiers' eyes, to be dried by some inner fire; and in her pallor there was a certain swarthy olive tint, the sign of vigorous character. Twice her little brother came to her, holding out a tiny hunting-horn with a touching charm, a winning look, and wistful expression, which would have sent Charlet into ecstasies, but she only scowled in answer to his "Here, Helene, will you take it?" so persuasively spoken. The little girl, so sombre and vehement beneath her apparent indifference, shuddered and even flushed red when her brother came near her; but the little one seemed not to notice his sister's dark mood, and his unconsciousness, blended with earnestness, marked a final difference in character between the child and the little girl, whose brow was overclouded already by the gloom of a man's knowledge and cares.

"Mamma, Helene will not play," cried the little one, seizing an opportunity to complain while the two stood silent on the Pont des Gobelins.

"Let her alone, Charles; you know very well that she is always cross."

Tears sprang to Helene's eyes at the words so thoughtlessly uttered by her mother as she turned abruptly to the young man by her side. The child devoured the speech in silence, but she gave her brother one of those sagacious looks that seemed inexplicable to me, glancing with a sinister expression from the bank where he stood to the Bièvre,* then at the bridge and the view, and then at me.

I was afraid lest my presence should disturb the happy couple; I slipped away and took refuge behind a thicket of alder trees, which completely screened me from all eyes. Sitting quietly on the summit of the bank, I watched the ever-changing landscape and the fierce-looking little girl, for with my head almost on a level with the boulevard I could still see her through the leaves. Helene seemed uneasy over my disappearance, her dark eyes looked for me down the alley and behind the trees with indefinable curiosity. What was I to her? Then Charles' baby laughter rang out like a bird's song in the silence. The tall, young man, with the same fair hair, was dancing him in his arms, showering kisses upon him, and the meaningless baby words of that "little language" which rises to our lips when we play with children. The mother looked on smiling, now and then, doubtless, putting in some low word that came up from the heart, for her companion would stop short in his full happiness, and the blue eyes that turned toward her were full of glowing light and love and worship. Their voices, blending with the child's voice, reached me with a vague sense of a caress. The three figures, charming in themselves, composed a lovely scene in a glorious landscape, filling it with a pervasive unimaginable grace. A delicately fair woman, radiant with smiles, a child of love, a young man with the irresistible charm of youth, a cloudless sky; nothing was wanting in nature to complete a perfect har-

* This river was noted for its beavers, hence the name.

mony for the delight of the soul. I found myself smiling as if their happiness had been my own.

The clocks struck nine. The young man gave a tender embrace to his companion, and went toward the tilbury which an old servant drove slowly to meet him. The lady had grown grave and almost sad. The child's prattle sounded unchecked through the last farewell kisses. Then the tilbury rolled away, and the lady stood motionless, listening to the sound of the wheels, watching the little cloud of dust raised by its passage along the road. Charles ran down the green pathway back to the bridge to join his sister. I heard his silver voice calling to her.

"Why did you not come to say good-by to my good friend?" cried he.

Helene looked up. Never, surely, did such hatred gleam from a child's eyes as from hers at that moment when she turned them on the brother who stood beside her on the bank side. She gave him an angry push. Charles lost his footing on the steep slope, stumbled over the roots of a tree, and fell headlong forward, dashing his forehead on the sharp-edged stones of the embankment, and, covered with blood, disappeared over the edge into the muddy river. The turbid water closed over a fair, bright head with a shower of splashes; one sharp shriek after another rang in my ears; then the sounds were stifled by the thick stream, and the poor child sank with a dull sound as if a stone had been thrown into the water. The accident had happened with more than lightning swiftness. I sprang down the footpath, and Helene, stupefied with horror, shrieked again and again—

"Mamma! mamma!"

The mother was there at my side. She had flown to the spot like a bird. But neither a mother's eyes nor mine could find the exact place where the little one had gone under. There was a wide space of black hurrying water, and below in the bed of the Bièvre ten feet of mud. There was not the

smallest possibility of saving the child. No one is stirring at that hour on a Sunday morning, and there are neither barges nor anglers on the Bièvre. There was not a creature in sight, not a pole to plumb the filthy stream. What need was there for me to explain how the ugly-looking accident had happened—accident or misfortune, whichever it might be? Had Helene avenged her father? Her jealousy surely was the sword of God. And yet when I looked at the mother I shivered. What fearful ordeal awaited her when she should return to her husband, the judge before whom she must stand all her days? And here with her was an inseparable, incorruptible witness. A child's forehead is transparent, a child's face hides no thoughts, and a lie, like a red flame set within, glows out in red that colors even the eyes. But the unhappy woman had not thought as yet of the punishment awaiting her at home; she was staring into the Bièvre.

Such an event must inevitably send ghastly echoes through a woman's life, and here is one of the most terrible of the reverberations that troubled Julie's love from time to time.

Several years had gone by. The Marquis de Vandenesse wore mourning for his father and succeeded to his estates. One evening, therefore, after dinner it happened that a notary was present in his house. This was no pettifogging lawyer after Sterne's pattern, but a very solid, substantial notary of Paris, one of your estimable men who do a stupid thing pompously, set down a foot heavily upon your private corn, and then ask what in the world there is to cry out about? If, by accident, they come to know the full extent of the enormity: "Upon my word," cry they, "I hadn't a notion!" This was a well-intentioned ass, in short, who could see nothing in life but deeds and documents.

Mme. d'Aiglemont had been dining with M. de Vandenesse; her husband had excused himself before dinner was over, for he was taking his two children to the play. They

were to go to some boulevard theatre or other, to the Ambigu-Comique or the Gaieté, sensational melodrama being judged harmless here in Paris, and suitable pabulum for childhood, because innocence is always triumphant in the fifth act. The boy and girl had teased their father to be there before the curtain rose, so he had left the table before dessert was served.

But the notary, the imperturbable notary, utterly incapable of asking himself why Mme. d'Aiglemont should have allowed her husband and children to go without her to the play, sat on as if he were screwed to his chair. Dinner was over, dessert had been prolonged by discussion, and coffee delayed. All these things consumed time, doubtless precious, and drew impatient movements from that charming woman; she looked not unlike a thorough-bred pawing the ground before a race; but the man of law, to whom horses and women were equally unknown quantities, simply thought the marquise a very lively and sparkling personage. So enchanted was he to be in the company of a woman of fashion and a political celebrity, that he was exerting himself to shine in conversation, and, taking the lady's forced smile for approbation, talked on with unflagging spirit, till the marquise was almost out of patience.

The master of the house, in concert with the lady, had more than once maintained an eloquent silence when the lawyer expected a civil reply; but these significant pauses were employed by the talkative nuisance in looking for anecdotes in the fire. M. de Vandenesse had recourse to his watch; the charming marquise tried the experiment of fastening her bonnet strings, and made as if she would go. But she did not go, and the notary, blind and deaf, and delighted with himself, was quite convinced that his interesting conversational powers were sufficient to keep the lady on the spot.

"I shall certainly have that woman for a client," said he to himself.

Meanwhile the marquise stood, putting on her gloves,

twisting her fingers, looking from the equally impatient Marquis de Vandenesse to the lawyer, still pounding away. At every pause in the worthy man's fire of witticisms the charming pair heaved a sigh of relief, and their looks said plainly, "At last! He is really going!"

Nothing of the kind. It was a nightmare which could only end in exasperating the two impassioned creatures, on whom the lawyer had something of the fascinating effect of a snake on a pair of birds; before long they would be driven to cut him short.

The clever notary was giving them the history of the discreditable ways in which one du Tillet (a stockbroker then much in favor) had laid the foundations of his fortune; all the ins and outs of the whole disgraceful business were accurately put before them; and the narrator was in the very middle of his tale when M. de Vandenesse heard the clock strike nine. Then it became clear to him that his legal adviser was very emphatically an idiot who must be sent forthwith about his business. He stopped him resolutely with a gesture.

"The tongs, my lord marquis?" queried the notary, handing the object in question to his client.

"No, monsieur, I am compelled to send you away. Mme. d'Aiglemont wishes to join her children, and I shall have the honor of escorting her."

"Nine o'clock already! Time goes like a shadow in pleasant company," said the man of law, who had talked on end for the past hour.

He looked for his hat, planted himself before the fire, with a suppressed hiccough; and, without heeding the marquise's withering glances, spoke once more to his impatient client—

"To sum up, my lord marquis. Business before all things. To-morrow, then, we must subpœna your brother; we will proceed to make out the inventory, and faith, after that——"

So ill had the lawyer understood his instructions that his impression was the exact opposite to the one intended. It

was a delicate matter, and Vandenesse, in spite of himself, began to put the thick-headed notary right. The discussion which followed took up a certain amount of time.

"Listen," the diplomatist said at last at a sign from the lady, "you are puzzling my brains; come back to-morrow at nine o'clock, and bring my attorney with you."

"But, as I have the honor of observing, my lord marquis, we are not certain of finding Monsieur Desroches to-morrow, and if the writ is not issued by noon to-morrow, the days of grace will expire, and then——"

As he spoke, a carriage entered the courtyard. The poor woman turned sharply away at the sound to hide the tears in her eyes. The marquis rang to give the servant orders to say that he was not at home; but before the footman could answer the bell, the lady's husband reappeared. He had returned unexpectedly from the Gaieté, and held both children by the hand. The little girl's eyes were red; the boy was fretful and very cross.

"What can have happened?" asked the marquise.

"I will tell you by-and-by," said the general, and, catching a glimpse through an open door of newspapers on the table in the adjoining sitting-room, he went off. The marquise, at the end of her patience, flung herself down on the sofa in desperation. The notary, thinking it incumbent upon him to be amiable with the children, spoke to the little boy in an insinuating tone—

"Well, my little man, and what is there on at the theatre?"

"'The Valley of the Torrent,'" said Gustave sulkily.

"Upon my word and honor," declared the notary, "authors nowadays are half crazy. 'The Valley of the Torrent!' Why not the Torrent of the Valley? It is conceivable that a valley might be without a torrent in it; now if they had said the Torrent of the Valley, that would have been something clear, something precise, something definite and comprehensible. But never mind that. Now, how is a drama to take

place in a torrent and in a valley? You will tell me that in these days the principal attraction lies in the scenic effect, and the title is a capital advertisement. And did you enjoy it, my little friend?" he continued, sitting down before the child.

When the notary pursued his inquiries as to the possibilities of a drama in the bed of a torrent, the little girl turned slowly away and began to cry. Her mother did not notice this in her intense annoyance.

"Oh! yes, monsieur, I enjoyed it very much," said the child. "There was a dear little boy in the play, and he was all alone in the world, because his papa could not have been his real papa. And when he came to the top of the bridge over the torrent, a big, naughty man with a beard, dressed all in black, came and threw him into the water. And then Helene began to sob and cry, and everybody scolded us, and father brought us away quick, quick——"

M. de Vandenesse and the marquise looked on in dull amazement, as if all power to think or move had been suddenly paralyzed.

"Do be quiet, Gustave!" cried the general. "I told you that you were not to talk about anything that happened at the play, and you have forgotten what I said already."

"Oh, my lord marquis, your lordship must excuse him," cried the notary. "I ought not to have asked questions, but I had no idea——"

"He ought not to have answered them," said the general, looking sternly at the child.

It seemed that the marquise and the master of the house both perfectly understood why the children had come back so suddenly. Mme. d'Aiglemont looked at her daughter, and rose as if to go to her, but a terrible convulsion passed over her face, and all that could be read in it was relentless severity.

"That will do, Helene," she said. "Go into the other room, and leave off crying."

"What can she have done, poor child?" asked the notary, thinking to appease the mother's anger and to stop Helene's tears at one stroke. "So pretty as she is, she must be as good as can be; never anything but a joy to her mother, I will be bound. Isn't that so, my little girl?"

Helene cowered, looked at her mother, dried her eyes, struggled for composure, and took refuge in the next room.

"And you, madame, are too good a mother not to love all your children alike. You are too good a woman, beside, to have any of those lamentable preferences which have such fatal effects, as we lawyers have only too much reason to know. Society goes through our hands; we see its passions in that most revolting form—greed. Here it is the mother of a family trying to disinherit her husband's children to enrich the others whom she loves better; or it is the husband who tries to leave all his property to the child who has done his best to earn his mother's hatred. And then begin quarrels, and fears, and deeds, and defeasances, and sham sales, and trusts, and all the rest of it—a pretty mess; in fact, it is pitiable, upon my honor pitiable! There are fathers that will spend their whole lives in cheating their children and robbing their wives. Yes, robbing is the only word for it. We were talking of tragedy; oh! I can assure you of this, that if we were at liberty to tell the real reasons of some donations that I know of, our modern dramatists would have the material for some sensational bourgeois dramas. How the wife manages to get her way, as she invariably does, I cannot think; for, in spite of appearances and in spite of their weakness, it is always the women who carry the day. Ah! by the way, they don't take *me* in. I always know the reason at the bottom of those predilections which the world politely styles 'unaccountable.' But in justice to the husbands, I must say that *they* never discover anything. You will tell me that this is a merciful dispens——"

Helene had come back to the drawing-room with her father,

and was listening attentively. So well did she understand all that was said that she gave her mother a frightened glance, feeling, with a child's quick instinct, that these remarks would aggravate the punishment hanging over her. The marquise turned her white face to Vandenesse; and, with terror in her eyes, indicated her husband, who stood with his eyes fixed absently on the flower pattern of the carpet. The diplomatist, accomplished man of the world though he was, could no longer contain his wrath, he gave the man of law a withering glance.

"Step this way, sir," he said, and he went hurriedly to the door of the antechamber; the notary left his sentence half finished, and followed, quaking, and the husband and wife were left together.

"Now, sir," said the Marquis de Vandenesse—he banged the drawing-room door and spoke with concentrated rage—"ever since dinner you have done nothing but make blunders and talk folly. For heaven's sake, go. You will make the most frightful mischief before you have done. If you are a clever man in your profession, keep to your profession; and if by any chance you should go into society, endeavor to be more circumspect."

With that he went back to the drawing-room, and did not even wish the notary good-evening. For a moment that worthy stood dumfounded, bewildered, utterly at a loss. Then, when the buzzing in his ears subsided, he thought he heard some one moaning in the next room. Footsteps came and went, and bells were violently rung. He was by no means anxious to meet the marquis again, and found the use of his legs to make good his escape, only to run against a hurrying crowd of servants at the door.

"Just the way with all these grand folk," said he to himself outside in the street as he looked about for a cab. "They lead you on to talk with compliments, and you think you are amusing them. Not a bit of it. They treat you in-

solently; put you at a distance; even put you out at the door without scruple. After all, I talked very cleverly, I said nothing but what was sensible, well turned, and discreet; and, upon my word, he advises me to be more circumspect in future. I will take good care of that! Eh! the mischief take it! I am a notary and a member of my chamber! Pshaw! it was an ambassador's fit of temper, nothing is sacred for people of that kind. To-morrow he shall explain what he meant by saying that I had done nothing but blunder and talk nonsense in his house. I will ask him for an explanation—that is, I will ask him to explain my mistake. After all is done and said, I am in the wrong perhaps—— Upon my word, it is very good of me to cudgel my brains like this. What business is it of mine?"

So the notary went home and laid the enigma before his spouse, with a complete account of the evening's events related in sequence.

And she replied: "My dear Crottat, his excellency was perfectly right when he said that you had done nothing but blunder and talk folly."

"Why?"

"My dear, if I told you why, it would not prevent you from doing the same thing somewhere else to-morrow. I tell you again—talk of nothing but business when you go out; that is my advice to you."

"If you will not tell me, I shall ask him to-morrow."

"Why, dear me! the veriest noodle is careful to hide a thing of that kind, and do you suppose that an ambassador will tell you about it? Really, Crottat, I have never known you so utterly devoid of commonsense."

"Thank you, my dear."

V.

TWO MEETINGS.

One of Napoleon's orderly staff-officers, who shall be known in this history only as the general or the marquis, had come to spend the spring at Versailles. He had made a large fortune under the Restoration; and, as his place at Court would not allow him to go very far from Paris, he had taken a country house between the church and the barrier of Montreuil, on the road that leads to the Avenue de Saint-Cloud.

The house had been built originally as a retreat for the short-lived loves of some great lord. The grounds were large; the gardens on either side extending from the first houses of Montreuil to the thatched cottages near the barrier, so that the owner could enjoy all the pleasures of solitude with the city almost at his gates. By an odd piece of contradiction, the whole front of the house itself, with the principal entrance, gave directly upon the street. Perhaps in time past it was a tolerably lonely road, and indeed this theory looks all the more probable when one comes to think of it; for not so very far away, on this same road, Louis Quinze built a delicious summer villa for Mlle. de Romans, and the curious in such things will discover that the wayside *casinos* (summer-houses) are adorned in a style that recalls traditions of the ingenious taste displayed in debauchery by our ancestors who, with all the license laid to their charge, sought to invest it with secrecy and mystery.

One winter evening the family were by themselves in the lonely house. The servants had received permission to go to Versailles to celebrate the wedding of one of their number. It was Christmas-time, and the holiday makers, presuming upon the double festival, did not scruple to outstay their leave

of absence; yet, as the general was well known to be a man of his word, the culprits felt some twinges of conscience as they danced on after the hour of return. The clocks struck eleven, and still there was no sign of the servants.

A deep silence prevailed over the countryside, broken only by the sound of the northeast wind whistling through the black branches, wailing about the house, dying in gusts along the corridors. The hard frost had purified the air, and held the earth in its grip; the roads gave back every sound with the hard metallic ring which always strikes us with a new surprise; the heavy footsteps of some belated reveler, or a cab returning to Paris, could be heard for a long distance with unwonted distinctness. Out in the courtyard a few dead leaves set a-dancing by some eddying gust found a voice for the night which fain had been silent. It was, in fact, one of those sharp, frosty evenings that wring barren expressions of pity from our selfish ease for wayfarers and the poor, and fills us with a luxurious sense of the comfort of the fireside.

But the family party in the salon at that hour gave not a thought to absent servants nor houseless folk, nor to the gracious charm with which a winter evening sparkles. No one played the philosopher out of season. Secure in the protection of an old soldier, women and children gave themselves up to the joys of home life, so delicious when there is no restraint upon feeling; and talk and play and glances are bright with frankness and affection.

The general sat, or more properly speaking, lay buried, in the depths of a huge, high-back armchair by the hearth. The heaped-up fire burnt scorchingly clear with the excessive cold of the night. The good father leaned his head slightly to one side against the back of the chair, in the indolence of perfect serenity and a glow of happiness. The languid, half-sleepy droop of his outstretched arms seemed to complete his expression of placid content. He was watching his youngest, a boy of five or thereabout, who, half-clad as he was, declined

to allow his mother to undress him. The little one fled from the night-gown and cap with which he was threatened now and again, and stoutly declined to part with his embroidered collar, laughing when his mother called to him, for he saw that she, too, was laughing at this declaration of infant independence. The next step was to go back to a game of romps with his sister. She was as much a child as he, but more mischievous; and she was older by two years, and could speak distinctly already, whereas his inarticulate words and confused ideas were a puzzle even to his parents. Little Moïna's playfulness, somewhat coquettish already, provoked inextinguishable laughter, explosions of merriment which went off like fireworks for no apparent cause. As they tumbled about before the fire, unconcernedly displaying little plump bodies and delicate white contours, as the dark and golden curls mingled in a collision of rosy cheeks dimpled with childish glee, a father surely, a mother most certainly, must have understood those little souls, and seen the character and power of passion already developed before their eyes. As the cherubs frolicked about, struggling, rolling, and tumbling without fear of hurt on the soft carpet, its flowers looked pale beside the glowing white and red of their cheeks and the brilliant color of their shining eyes.

On the sofa by the fire, opposite the great armchair, the children's mother sat among a heap of scattered garments, with a little scarlet shoe in her hand. She seemed to have given herself up completely to the enjoyment of the moment; wavering discipline had relaxed into a sweet smile engraved upon her lips. At the age of six-and-thirty, or thereabout, she was a beautiful woman still, by reason of the rare perfection of the outlines of her face, and at this moment light and warmth and happiness filled it with preternatural brightness.

Again and again her eyes wandered from her children, and their tender gaze was turned upon her husband's grave face;

and now and again the eyes of husband and wife met with a silent exchange of happiness and thoughts from some inner depth.

The general's face was deeply bronzed, a stray lock of gray hair scored shadows on his forehead. The reckless courage of the battlefield could be read in the lines carved in his hollow cheeks, and gleams of rugged strength in the blue eyes; clearly the bit of red ribbon flaunting at his button-hole had been paid for by hardship and toil. An inexpressible kindliness and frankness shone out of the strong, resolute face which reflected his children's merriment; the gray-haired captain found it not so very hard to become a child again. Is there not always a love of little children in the heart of a soldier who has seen enough of the seamy-side of life to know something of the piteous limitations of strength and the privileges of weakness?

At a round table rather farther away, in a circle of bright lamplight that dimmed the feebler illumination of the wax candles on the mantel, sat a boy of thirteen, rapidly turning the pages of a thick volume which he was reading, undisturbed by the shouts of the children. There was a boy's curiosity in his face. From his *lycéens* uniform he was evidently a schoolboy, and the book he was reading was the "Arabian Nights." Small wonder that he was deeply absorbed. He sat perfectly still in a meditative attitude, with an elbow on the table, and his hand propping his head—the white fingers contrasting strongly with the brown hair into which they were thrust. As he sat, with the light turned full upon his face, and the rest of his body in shadow, he looked like one of Raphael's dark portraits of himself—a bent head and intent eyes filled with visions of the future.

Between the table and the marquise a tall, beautiful girl sat at her tapestry frame; sometimes she drew back from her work, sometimes she bent over it, and her hair, picturesque in its ebony smoothness and darkness, caught the light of the

lamp. Helene was a picture in herself. In her beauty there was a rare distinctive character of power and refinement. Though her hair was gathered up and drawn back from her face, so as to trace a clearly marked line about her head, so thick and abundant was it, so recalcitrant to the comb, that it sprang back in curl-tendrils to the nape of her neck. The bountiful line of eyebrows was evenly marked out in dark contrasting outline upon her pure forehead. On her upper lip beneath the Grecian nose with its sensitively perfect curve of nostril, there lay a faint, swarthy shadow, the sign-manual of courage; but the enchanting roundness of contour, the frankly innocent expression of her other features, the transparence of the delicate carnations, the voluptuous softness of the lips, the flawless oval of the outline of the face, and with these, and more than all these, the saintlike expression in the girlish eyes, gave to her vigorous loveliness the distinctive touch of feminine grace, that enchanting modesty which we look for in these angels of peace and love. Yet there was no suggestion of fragility about her; and, surely, with so grand a woman's frame, so attractive a face, she must possess a corresponding warmth of heart and strength of soul.

She was as silent as her schoolboy brother. Seemingly a prey to the fateful maiden meditations which baffle a father's penetration and even a mother's sagacity, it was impossible to be certain whether it was the lamplight that cast those shadows that flitted over her face like thin clouds over a bright sky, or whether they were passing shades of secret and painful thoughts.

Husband and wife had quite forgotten the two older children at that moment, though now and again the general's questioning glance traveled to that second mute picture; a larger growth, a gracious realization, as it were, of the hopes embodied in the baby forms rioting in the foreground. Their faces made up a kind of living poem, illustrating life's various phases. The luxurious background of the salon, the different

attitudes, the strong contrasts of coloring in the faces, differing with the character of differing ages, the modeling of the forms brought into high relief by the light—altogether it was a page of human life, richly illuminated beyond the art of painter, sculptor, or poet. Silence, solitude, night, and winter lent a final touch of majesty to complete the simplicity and sublimity of this exquisite effect of nature's contriving. Married life is full of these sacred hours, which perhaps owe their indefinable charm to some vague memory of a better world. A divine radiance surely shines upon them, the destined compensation for some portion of earth's sorrows, the solace which enables man to accept life. We seem to behold a vision of an enchanted universe, the great conception of its system widens out before our eyes, and social life pleads for its laws by bidding us look to the future.

Yet in spite of the tender glances that Helene gave Abel and Moina after a fresh outburst of merriment; in spite of the look of gladness in her transparent face whenever she stole a glance at her father, a deep melancholy pervaded her gestures, her attitude, and, more than all, her eyes veiled by their long lashes. Those white, strong hands, through which the light passed, tinting them with a diaphanous almost fluid red—those hands were trembling. Once only did the eyes of the mother and daughter clash without shrinking, and the two women read each other's thoughts in a look, cold, wan, and respectful on Helene's part, sombre and threatening on her mother's. At once Helene's eyes were lowered to her work, she plied her needle swiftly, and it was long before she raised her head, bowed as it seemed by a weight of thought too heavy to bear. Was the marquise over-harsh with this one of her children? Did she think this harshness needful? Was she jealous of Helene's beauty? She might still hope to rival Helene, but only by the magic arts of the toilet. Or, again, had her daughter, like many a girl who reaches the clairvoyant age, read the secrets which this wife (to all ap-

pearance so religiously faithful in the fulfillment of her duties) believed to be buried in her own heart as deeply as in a grave?

Helene had reached an age when purity of soul inclines to pass over-rigid judgments. A certain order of mind is apt to exaggerate transgression into crime; imagination reacts upon conscience, and a young girl is a hard judge because she magnifies the seriousness of the offense. Helene seemed to think herself worthy of no one. Perhaps there was a secret in her past life, perhaps something had happened, unintelligible to her at the time, but with gradually developing significance for a mind grown susceptible to religious influences; something which lately seemed to have degraded her, as it were, in her own eyes and according to her own romantic standard. This change in her demeanor dated from the day of reading Schiller's noble tragedy of "William Tell" in a series of translations. Her mother scolded her for letting the book fall, and then remarked to herself that the passage which had so worked on Helene's feelings was the scene in which William Tell, who spilt the blood of a tyrant to save a nation, fraternizes in some sort with John the Parricide. Helene had grown humble, dutiful, and self-contained; she no longer cared for gayety. Never had she made so much of her father, especially when the marquise was not by to watch her girlish caresses. And yet, if Helene's affection for her mother had cooled at all, the change in her manner was so slight as to be almost imperceptible; so slight that the general could not have noticed it, jealous though he might be of the harmony of home. No masculine insight could have sounded the depths of those two feminine natures; the one was young and generous, the other sensitive and proud; the first had a wealth of indulgence in her nature, the second was full of craft and love. If the marquise made her daughter's life a burden to her by a woman's subtle tyranny, it was a tyranny invisible to all but the victim; and, for the rest, these con-

jectures only called forth after the event must remain conjectures. Until this night no accusing flash of light had escaped either of them, but an ominous mystery was too surely growing up between them, a mystery known only to themselves and God.

"Come, Abel," called the marquise, seizing on her opportunity when the children were tired of play and still for a moment. "Come, come, my child; you must be put to bed——"

And with a glance that must be obeyed, she caught him up and took him on her knee.

"What!" exclaimed the general. "Half-past ten o'clock, and not one of the servants has come back! The rascals! Gustave," he added, turning to his son, "I allowed you to read that book only on the condition that you should put it away at ten o'clock. You ought to have shut up the book at the proper time and gone to bed, as you promised. If you mean to make your mark in the world, you must keep your word; let it be a second religion to you and a point of honor. Fox, one of the greatest of English orators, was remarkable, above all things, for the beauty of his character, and the very first of his qualities was the scrupulous faithfulness with which he kept his engagements. When he was a child, his father (an Englishman of the old school) gave him a pretty strong lesson which he never forgot. Like most rich Englishmen, Fox's father had a country house and a considerable park about it. Now, in the park there was an old summer-house, and orders had been given that this summer-house was to be pulled down and put up somewhere else where there was a finer view. Fox was just about your age, and had come home for the holidays. Boys are fond of seeing things pulled to pieces, so young Fox asked to stay on at home for a few days longer to see the old summer-house taken down; but his father said that he must go back to school on the proper day, so there was anger between father and son. Fox's mother

(like all mammas) took the boy's part. Then the father solemnly promised that the summer-house should stay where it was till the next holidays.

"So Fox went back to school; and his father, thinking that lessons would soon drive the whole thing out of the boy's mind, had the summer-house pulled down and put up in the new position. But, as it happened, the persistent youngster thought of nothing but that summer-house; and as soon as he came home again, his first care was to go out to look at the old building, and he came in to breakfast looking quite doleful, and said to his father: 'You have broken your promise.' The old English gentleman said with confusion full of dignity, 'That is true, my boy; but I will make amends. A man ought to think of keeping his word before he thinks of his fortune; for by keeping to his word he will gain fortune, while all the fortunes in the world will not efface the stain left on your conscience by a breach of faith.' Then he gave orders that the summer-house should be put up again in the old place, and when it had been rebuilt he had it taken down again for his son to see. Let this be a lesson to *you*, Gustave."

Gustave had been listening with interest, and now he closed the book at once. There was a moment's silence, while the general took possession of Moïna, who could scarcely keep her eyes open. The little one's languid head fell back on her father's breast, and in a moment she was fast asleep, wrapped round about in her golden curls.

Just then a sound of hurrying footsteps rang on the pavement out in the street, immediately followed by three knocks on the street-door, waking the echoes of the house. The reverberating blows told, as plainly as a cry for help, that here was a man flying for his life. The house dog barked furiously. A thrill of excitement ran through Helene and Gustave and the general and his wife; but neither Abel, with the night-cap strings just tied under his chin, nor Moïna awoke.

"The fellow is in a hurry!" exclaimed the general. He

put the little girl down on the chair and hastened out of the room, heedless of his wife's entreating cry: "Dear, do not go down——"

He stepped into his own room for a pair of pistols, lighted a dark lantern, sprang at lightning speed down the staircase, and in another minute reached the house-door, his oldest boy fearlessly following.

"Who is there?" demanded he.

"Let me in," panted a breathless voice.

"Are you a friend?"

"Yes, friend."

"Are you alone?"

"Yes! But let me in; *they* are after me!"

The general had scarcely set the door ajar before a man slipped into the porch with the uncanny swiftness of a shadow. Before the master of the house could prevent him, the intruder had closed the door with a well-directed kick, and set his back against it resolutely, as if he were determined that it should not be opened again. In a moment the general had his lantern and pistol at a level with the stranger's breast, and beheld a man of medium height in a fur-lined pelisse. It was an old man's garment, both too large and too long for its present wearer. Chance or caution had slouched the man's hat over his eyes.

"You can lower your pistol, sir," said this person. "I do not claim to stay in your house against your will; but if I leave it, death is waiting for me at the barrier. And what a death! You would be answerable to God for it! I ask for your hospitality for two hours. And bear this in mind, sir, that, suppliant as I am, I have a right to command with the despotism of necessity. I want the Arab's hospitality. Either I and my secret must be inviolable, or open the door and I will go to my death. I want secrecy, a safe hiding-place, and water. Oh! water!" he cried again, with a rattle in his throat.

"Who are you?" demanded the general, taken aback by the stranger's feverish volubility.

"Ah! who am I? Good, open the door, and I will put a distance between us," retorted the other, and there was a diabolical irony in his tone.

Dexterously as the marquis passed the light of the lantern over the man's face, he could only see the lower half of it, and that in nowise prepossessed him in favor of this singular claimant of hospitality. The cheeks were livid and quivering, the features dreadfully contorted. Under the shadow of the hat-brim a pair of eyes gleamed out like flames; the feeble candlelight looked almost dim in comparison. Some sort of answer must be made however.

"Your language, sir, is so extraordinary that in my place you yourself——"

"My life is in your hands!" the intruder broke in. The sound of his voice was dreadful to hear.

"Two hours?" said the marquis wavering.

"Two hours," echoed the other.

Then quite suddenly, with a desperate gesture, he pushed back his hat and left his forehead bare, and, as if he meant to try a final expedient, he gave the general a glance that seemed to plunge like a vivid flash into his very soul. That electrical discharge of intelligence and will was swift as lightning and crushing as a thunderbolt; for there are moments when a human being is invested for a brief space with inexplicable power.

"Come, whoever you may be, you shall be in safety under my roof," the master of the house said gravely at last, acting, as he imagined, upon one of those intuitions which a man cannot always explain to himself.

"God will repay you!" said the stranger, with a deep, involuntary sigh.

"Have you weapons?" asked the general.

For all answer the stranger flung open his fur pelisse,

and scarcely gave the other time for a glance before he wrapped it about him again. To all appearance he was unarmed and in evening dress. Swift as the soldier's scrutiny had been, he saw something, however, which made him exclaim—

"Where the devil have you been to get yourself in such a mess in such dry weather?"

"More questions!" said the stranger haughtily.

At the words the marquis caught sight of his son, and his own late homily on the strict fulfillment of a given word came up in his mind. In lively vexation, he exclaimed, not without a touch of anger—

"What! little rogue, you here when you ought to be in bed?"

"Because I thought I might be some good in danger," answered Gustave.

"There, go up to your room," said his father, mollified by the reply. "And you" (addressing the stranger), "come with me."

The two men grew as silent as a pair of gamblers who watch each other's play with mutual suspicions. The general himself began to be troubled with ugly presentiments. The strange visit weighed upon his mind already like a nightmare; but he had passed his word, there was no help for it now, and he led the way along the passages and stairways till they reached a large room on the third floor immediately above the salon. This was an empty room where linen was dried in the winter. It had but the one door, and for all decoration boasted one solitary, shabby looking-glass above the mantel, left by the previous owner, and a great pier-glass, placed provisionally opposite the fireplace until such time as a use should be found for it in the rooms below. The four yellowish walls were bare. The floor had never been swept. The huge attic was icy-cold, and the furniture consisted of a couple of rickety straw-bottomed chairs, or rather frames of chairs,

The general set the lantern down upon the mantel. Then he spoke:

"It is necessary for your own safety to hide you in this comfortless attic. And, as you have my promise to keep your secret, you will permit me to lock you in."

The other bent his head in acquiescence.

"I asked for nothing but a hiding-place, secrecy, and water," returned he.

"I will bring you some directly," said the marquis, shutting the door cautiously. He groped his way down into the salon for a lamp before going to the kitchen to look for a carafe.

"Well, what is it?" the marquise asked quickly.

"Nothing, dear," he returned coolly.

"But we listened, and we certainly heard you go upstairs with somebody."

"Helene," said the general, and he looked at his daughter, who raised her face, "bear in mind that your father's honor depends upon your discretion. You must have heard nothing."

The girl bent her head in answer. The marquise was confused and smarting inwardly at the way in which her husband had thought fit to silence her.

Meanwhile the general went for the bottle and a tumbler, and returned to the room above. His prisoner was leaning against the mantel, his head was bare, he had flung down his hat on one of the two chairs. Evidently he had not expected to have so bright a light turned upon him, and he frowned and looked anxious as he met the general's keen eyes; but his face softened and wore a gracious expression as he thanked his protector. When the latter placed the bottle and glass on the mantel-shelf, the stranger's eyes flashed out on him again; and when he spoke, it was in musical tones with no sign of the previous guttural convulsion, though his voice was still unsteady with repressed emotion.

"I shall seem to you to be a strange being, sir, but you must pardon the caprices of necessity. If you propose to re-

main in the room, I beg that you will not look at me while I am drinking."

Vexed at this continual obedience to a man whom he disliked, the general sharply turned his back upon him. The stranger thereupon drew a white handkerchief from his pocket and wound it about his right hand. Then he seized the carafe and emptied it at a draught. The marquis, staring vacantly into the tall mirror across the room, without a thought of breaking his implicit promise, saw the stranger's figure distinctly reflected by the opposite looking-glass, and saw, too, a red stain suddenly appear through the folds of the white bandage—the man's hands were steeped in blood.

"Ah! you saw me!" cried the other. He had drunk off the water and wrapped himself again in his cloak, and now scrutinized the general suspiciously. "It is all over with me! Here they come!"

"I don't hear anything," said the marquis.

"You have not the same interest that I have in listening for sounds in the air."

"You have been fighting a duel, I suppose, to be in such a state?" queried the general, not a little disturbed by the color of those broad, dark patches staining his visitor's shabby cloak.

"Yes, a duel; you have it," said the other, and a bitter smile flitted over his lips.

As he spoke a sound rang along the distant road, a sound of galloping horses; but so faint as yet that it was the merest dawn of a sound. The general's trained ear recognized the advance of a troop of regulars.

"That is the gendarmerie," said he.

He glanced at his prisoner to reassure him after his own involuntary indiscretion, took the lamp, and went down to the salon. He had scarcely laid the key of the room above upon the mantel when the hoof-beats sounded louder and came swiftly nearer and nearer the house. The general felt a shiver

of excitement, and indeed the horses stopped at the house-door; a few words were exchanged among the men, and one of them dismounted and knocked loudly. There was no help for it; the general went to open the door. He could scarcely conceal his inward perturbation at the sight of half a dozen gendarmes outside, the metal rims of their caps gleaming like silver in the moonlight.

"My lord," said the corporal, "have you heard a man run past toward the barrier within the last few minutes?"

"Toward the barrier? No."

"Have you opened the door to any one?"

"Now, am I in the habit of answering the door myself, what——?"

"I ask your pardon, general, but just now it seems to me that——"

"Really!" cried the marquis wrathfully. "Have you a mind to try joking with me? What right have you——?"

"None at all, none at all, my lord," cried the corporal, hastily putting in a soft answer. "You will excuse our zeal. We know, of course, that a peer of France is not likely to harbor a murderer at this time of night; but as we want any information we can get——"

"A murderer!" cried the general. "Who, then, can have been——"

"Monsieur le Baron de Mauny has just been murdered. It was a blow from an axe, and we are in hot pursuit of the criminal. We know for certain that he is somewhere in this neighborhood, and we shall hunt him down. By your leave, general," and the man swung himself into the saddle as he spoke. It was well that he did so, for a corporal of gendarmerie trained to alert observation and quick surmise would have had his suspicions at once if he had caught sight of the general's face. Everything that passed through the soldier's mind was faithfully revealed in his frank countenance.

"Is it known whom the murderer is?" asked he.

"No," said the other, now in the saddle. "He left the bureau full of bank-notes and gold untouched."

"It was revenge, then," said the marquis.

"On an old man? pshaw! No, no, the fellow hadn't time to take it, that was all," and the corporal galloped after his comrades, who were almost out of sight by this time.

For a few minutes the general stood, a victim to perplexities which need no explanation; but in a moment he heard the servants returning home, their voices were raised in some sort of dispute at the cross-roads of Montreuil. When they came in he gave vent to his feelings in an explosion of rage, his wrath fell upon them like a thunderbolt, and all the echoes of the house trembled at the sound of his voice. In the midst of the storm his own man, the boldest and cleverest of the party, brought out an excuse; they had been stopped, he said, by the gendarmerie at the gate of Montreuil, a murder had been committed, and the police were in pursuit. In a moment the general's anger vanished, he said not another word; then, bethinking himself of his own singular position, drily ordered them all off to bed at once, and left them amazed at his readiness to accept their fellow-servant's lying excuse.

While these incidents took place in the yard, an apparently trifling occurrence had changed the relative positions of three characters in this story. The marquis had scarcely left the room before his wife looked first toward the key on the mantel-shelf and then at Helene, and, after some wavering, bent toward her daughter and said in a low voice, "Helene, your father has left the key on the mantel."

The girl looked up in surprise and glanced timidly at her mother. The marquise's eyes sparkled with curiosity.

"Well, mamma?" she said, and her voice had a troubled ring.

"I should like to know what is going on upstairs. If there is anybody up there, he has not stirred yet. Just go quietly up——"

"*I?*" cried the girl, with something like horror in her tones.

"Are you afraid?"

"No, mamma, but I thought I heard a man's footsteps," she answered.

"If I could go myself, I should not have asked you to go, Helene," said her mother with cold dignity. "If your father were to come back and did not see me, he would go to look for me, perhaps, but he would not notice your absence."

"Madame, if you bid me go, I will go," said Helene, "but I shall lose my father's good opinion——"

"What is this?" cried the marquise in a sarcastic tone. "But, since you take a thing that was said in joke in earnest, I now *order* you to go upstairs and see whom it is in the room above. Here is the key, child. When your father told you to say nothing about this thing that happened, he did not forbid you to go up to the room. Go at once—and learn that a daughter ought never to judge her mother."

The last words were spoken with all the severity of a justly offended mother. The marquise took the key and handed it to Helene, who rose without a word and left the room.

"My mother can always easily obtain her pardon," thought the girl; "but as for me, my father will never think the same of me again. Does she mean to rob me of his tenderness? Does she want to turn me out of his house?"

These were the thoughts that set her imagination in a sudden ferment, as she went down the dark passage to the mysterious door at the end. When she stood before it, her mental confusion grew to a fearful pitch. Feelings hitherto forced down into inner depths crowded up at the summons of these confused thoughts. Perhaps hitherto she had never believed that a happy life lay before her, but now, in this awful moment, her despair was complete. She shook convulsively as she set the key in the lock; so great, indeed, was her agitation that she stopped for a moment and laid her hand on her

heart, as if to still the heavy throbs that sounded in her ears. Then she opened the door.

The creaking of the hinges sounded doubtless in vain on the murderer's ears. Acute as were his powers of hearing, he stood as if lost in thought, and so motionless that he might have been glued to the wall against which he leaned. In the circle of semi-opaque darkness, dimly lit by the bull's-eye lantern, he looked like the shadowy figure of some dead knight, standing for ever in his shadowy mortuary niche in the gloom of some Gothic chapel. Drops of cold sweat trickled over the broad, sallow forehead. An incredible fearlessness looked out from every tense feature. His eyes of fire were fixed and tearless; he seemed to be watching some struggle in the darkness beyond him. Stormy thoughts passed swiftly across a face whose firm decision spoke of a character of no common order. His whole person, bearing, and frame bore out the impression of a tameless spirit. The man looked power and strength personified; he stood facing the darkness as if it were the visible image of his own future.

These physical characteristics had made no impression upon the general, familiar as he was with the powerful faces of the group of giants gathered about Napoleon; speculative curiosity, moreover, as to the why and wherefore of the apparition had completely filled his mind; but Helene, with feminine sensitiveness to surface impressions, was struck by the blended chaos of light and darkness, grandeur and passion, suggesting a likeness between this stranger and Lucifer recovering from his fall. Suddenly the storm apparent in his face was stilled as if by magic; and the indefinable power to sway which the stranger exercised upon others, and perhaps unconsciously and as by reflex action upon himself, spread its influence about him with the progressive swiftness of a flood. A torrent of thought rolled away from his brow as his face resumed its ordinary expression. Perhaps it was the strangeness of this meeting, or perhaps it was the mystery into which she had

HE TURNED HIS HEAD TOWARD HIS HOST'S DAUGHTER.

penetrated, that held the young girl spellbound in the doorway, so that she could look at a face pleasant to behold and full of interest. For some moments she stood in the magical silence; a trouble had come upon her never known before in her young life. Perhaps some exclamation broke from Helene, perhaps she moved unconsciously; or it may be that the hunted criminal returned of his own accord from the world of ideas to the material world and heard some one breathing in the room; however it was, he turned his head toward his host's daughter and saw dimly in the shadow a noble face and queenly form, which he must have taken for an angel's, so motionless she stood, so vague and like a spirit.

"Monsieur——" a trembling voice cried.

The murderer trembled.

"A woman!" he cried under his breath. "Is it possible? Go," he cried; "I deny that any one has a right to pity, to absolve, or condemn me. I must live alone. Go, my child," he added, with an imperious gesture; "I should ill requite the service done me by the master of the house if I were to allow a single creature under his roof to breathe the same air with me. I must submit to be judged by the laws of the world."

The last words were uttered in a lower voice. Even as he realized with a profound intuition all the manifold misery awakened by that melancholy thought, the glance that he gave Helene had something of the power of the serpent, stirring a whole dormant world in the mind of the strange girl before him. To her that glance was like a light revealing unknown lands. She was stricken with strange trouble, helpless, quelled by a magnetic power exerted unconsciously. Trembling and ashamed, she went out and returned to the salon. She had scarcely entered the room before her father came back, so that she had not time to say a word to her mother.

The general was wholly absorbed in thought. He folded his arms, and paced silently to and fro between the windows

which looked out upon the street and the second row which gave upon the garden. His wife held the sleeping Abel on her knee, and little Moïna lay in untroubled slumber in the low chair, like a bird in its nest. Her elder sister stared into the fire, a skein of silk in one hand, a needle in the other.

Deep silence prevailed, broken only by lagging footsteps on the stairs, as one by one the servants crept away to bed; there was an occasional burst of stifled laughter, a last echo of the wedding festivity, or doors were opened as they still talked among themselves, then shut. A smothered sound came now and again from the bedrooms, a chair fell, the old coachman coughed feebly, then all was silent.

In a little while the dark majesty with which sleeping earth is invested at midnight brought all things under its sway. No lights shone but the light of the stars. The frost gripped the ground. There was not a sound of a voice, nor a living creature stirring. The crackling of the fire only seemed to make the depth of the silence more fully felt.

The church clock of Montreuil had just struck one, when an almost inaudible sound of a light footstep came from the second flight of stairs. The marquis and his daughter, both believing that M. de Mauny's murderer was a prisoner above, thought that one of the maids had come down, and no one was at all surprised to hear the door open in the antechamber. Quite suddenly the murderer appeared in their midst. The marquis himself was sunk in deep musings, the mother and daughter were silent, the one from keen curiosity, the other from sheer astonishment, so that the visitor was almost half-way across the room when he spoke to the general.

"Sir, the two hours are almost over," he said, in a voice that was strangely calm and musical.

"*You here!*" cried the general. "By what means——?" and he gave wife and daughter a formidable questioning glance. Helene grew red as fire.

"You!" he went on, in a tone filled with horror. "*You* among us! A murderer covered with blood! You are a blot on this picture! Go, go out!" he added in a burst of rage.

At that word "murderer," the marquise cried out; as for Helene, it seemed to mark an epoch in her life, there was not a trace of surprise in her face. She looked as if she had been waiting for this—for him. Those so vast thoughts of hers had found a meaning. The punishment reserved by heaven for her sins flamed out before her. In her own eyes she was as great a criminal as this murderer; she confronted him with her quiet gaze; she was his fellow, his sister. It seemed to her that in this accident the command of God had been made manifest. If she had been a few years older, reason would have disposed of her remorse, but at this moment she was like one distraught.

The stranger stood impassive and self-possessed; a scornful smile overspread his features and his thick, red lips were curled ironically.

"You appreciate the magnanimity of my behavior very badly," he said slowly. "I would not touch with my fingers the glass of water you brought me to allay my thirst; I did not so much as think of washing my blood-stained hands under your roof; I am going away, leaving nothing of *my crime*" (here his lips were compressed) "but the memory; I have tried to leave no trace of my presence in this house. Indeed, I would not even allow your daughter to——"

"*My daughter!*" cried the general, with a horror-stricken glance at Helene. "Vile wretch, go, or I will kill you——"

"The two hours are not yet over," said the other; "if you kill me or give me up, you *must lower* yourself in your own eyes—and in mine."

At these last words, the general turned to stare at the criminal in dumb amazement; but he could not endure the intolerable light in those eyes which for the second time disorganized

his being. He was afraid of showing weakness once more, conscious as he was that his will was weaker already.

"An old man! You can never have seen a family," he said, with a father's glance at his wife and children.

"Yes, an old man," echoed the stranger, frowning slightly.

"Fly!" cried the general, but he did not dare to look at his guest. "Our compact is broken. I shall not kill you. No! I will never be purveyor to the scaffold. But go out. You make us shudder."

"I know that," said the other patiently. "There is not a spot on French soil where I can set foot and be safe; but if man's justice, like God's, took all into account, if man's justice deigned to inquire which was the monster—the murderer or his victim—then I might hold up my head among my fellows. Can you not guess that other crimes preceded that blow from an axe? I constituted myself his judge and executioner; I stepped in where man's justice failed. That was my crime. Farewell, sir. Bitter though you have made your hospitality, I shall not forget it. I shall always bear in my heart a feeling of gratitude toward one man in the world, and you are that man. But I could wish that you had showed yourself more generous!"

He turned toward the door, but in the same instant Helene leaned to whisper something in her mother's ear.

"Ah!"

At the cry that broke from his wife, the general trembled as if he had seen Moïna lying dead. There stood Helene, and the murderer had turned instinctively, with something like anxiety about these folk in his face.

"What is it, dear?" asked the general.

"Helene wants to go with him."

The murderer's face flushed.

"If that is how my mother understands an almost involuntary exclamation," Helene said in a low voice, "I will fulfill her wishes." She glanced about her with something like

fierce pride; then the girl's eyes fell, and she stood, admirable in her modesty.

"Helene, did you go up to the room where——?"

"Yes, father."

"Helene" (and his voice shook with a convulsive tremor), "is this the first time that you have seen this man?"

"Yes, father."

"Then it is not natural that you should intend to——"

"If it is not natural, father, at any rate it is true."

"Oh! child," said the marquise, lowering her voice, but not so much but that her husband could hear her, "you are false to all the principles of honor, modesty, and right which I have tried to cultivate in your heart. If until this fatal hour your life has only been one lie, there is nothing to regret in your loss. It can hardly be the moral perfection of this stranger that attracts you to him? Can it be the kind of power that commits crime? I have too good an opinion of you to suppose that——"

"Oh, suppose everything, madame," Helene said coldly.

But though her force of character sustained this ordeal, her flashing eyes could scarcely hold the tears that filled them. The stranger, watching her, guessed the mother's language from the girl's tears, and turned his eagle glance upon the marquise. An irresistible power constrained her to look at this terrible seducer; but as her eyes met his bright, glittering gaze, she felt a shiver run through her frame, such a shock as we feel at the sight of a reptile or the contact of a Leyden jar.

"Dear!" she cried, turning to her husband, "this is the Fiend himself! He can divine everything!"

The general rose to his feet and went to the bell.

"He means ruin for you," Helene said to the murderer.

The stranger smiled, took one forward stride, grasped the general's arm, and compelled him to endure a steady gaze which benumbed the soldier's brain and left him powerless.

"I will repay you now for your hospitality," he said, "and then we shall be quits. I will spare you the shame by giving myself up. After all, what should I do now with my life?"

"You could repent," answered Helene, and her glance conveyed such hope as only glows in a young girl's eyes.

"*I shall never repent,*" said the murderer in a sonorous voice, as he raised his head proudly.

"His hands are stained with blood," the father said.

"I will wipe it away," she answered.

"But do you so much as know whether he cares for you?" said her father, not daring now to look at the stranger.

The murderer came up a little nearer. Some light within seemed to glow through Helene's beauty, grave and maidenly though it was, coloring and bringing into relief, as it were, the least details, the most delicate lines in her face. The stranger, with that terrible fire still blazing in his eyes, gave one tender glance to her enchanting loveliness, then he spoke, his tones revealing how deeply he had been moved.

"And if I refuse to allow this sacrifice of yourself, and so discharge my debt of two hours of existence to your father; is not this love, love for yourself alone?"

"Then do you too reject me?" Helene's cry rang painfully through the hearts of all who heard her. "Farewell, then, to you all; I will die."

"What does this mean?" asked the father and mother.

Helene gave her mother an eloquent glance and lowered her eyes.

Since the first attempt made by the general and his wife to contest by word or action the intruder's strange presumption to the right of staying in their midst, from their first experience of the power of those glittering eyes, a mysterious torpor had crept over them, and their benumbed faculties struggled in vain with a preternatural influence. The air seemed to have suddenly grown so heavy that they could scarcely breathe; yet, while they could not find the reason of this

feeling of oppression, a voice within told them that this magnetic presence was the real cause of their helplessness. In this moral agony, it flashed across the general that he must make every effort to overcome this influence on his daughter's reeling brain; he caught her by the waist and drew her into the embrasure of a window, as far as possible from the murderer.

"Darling," he murmured, "if some wild love has been suddenly born in your heart, I cannot believe that you have not the strength of soul to quell the mad impulse; your innocent life, your pure and dutiful soul, has given me too many proofs of your character. There must be something behind all this. Well, this heart of mine is full of indulgence, you can tell everything to me; even if it breaks, dear child, I can be silent about my grief, and keep your confession a secret. What is it? Are you jealous of our love for your brothers or your little sister? Is it some love trouble? Are you unhappy here at home? Tell me about it, tell me the reasons that urge you to leave your home, to rob it of its greatest charm, to leave your mother and brothers and your little sister?"

"I am in love with no one, father, and jealous of no one, not even of your friend the diplomatist, Monsieur de Vandenesse."

The marquise turned pale; her daughter saw this, and stopped short.

"Sooner or later I must live under some man's protection, must I not?"

"That is true."

"Do we ever know," she went on, "the human being to whom we link our destinies? Now, I believe in this man."

"Oh, child," said the general, raising his voice, "you have no idea of all the misery that lies in store for you."

"I am thinking of *his*."

"What a life!" groaned the father.

"A woman's life," the girl murmured.

"You have a great knowledge of life!" exclaimed the marquise, finding speech at last.

"Madame, my answers are shaped by the questions; but if you desire it, I will speak more clearly."

"Speak out, my child—— I am a mother."

Mother and daughter looked each other in the face, and the marquise said no more. At last she said—

"Helene, if you have any reproaches to make, I would rather bear them than see you go away with a man from whom the whole world shrinks in horror."

"Then you see yourself, madame, that but for me he would be quite alone."

"That will do, madame," the general cried; "we have but one daughter left to us now," and he looked at Moïna, who slept on. "As for you," he added, turning to Helene, "I will put you in a convent."

"So be it, father," she said, in calm despair, "I shall die there. You are answerable to God alone for my life and for *his* soul."

A deep, sudden silence fell after those words. The on-lookers during this strange scene, so utterly at variance with all the sentiments of ordinary life, shunned each other's eloquent eyes.

Suddenly the marquis happened to glance at his pistols. He caught up one of them, cocked the weapon, and pointed it at the intruder. At the click of firearms the other turned his piercing gaze full upon the general; the soldier's arm slackened indescribably and fell heavily to his side. The pistol dropped to the floor.

"Girl, you are free," said he, exhausted by this ghastly struggle. "Kiss your mother, if she will let you kiss her. For my own part, I wish never to see nor to hear of you again."

"Helene," the mother began, "only think of the wretched life before you."

A sort of rattling sound came from the intruder's deep chest, all eyes turned to him. Disdain was plainly visible in his face.

The general rose to his feet. "My hospitality has cost me dear," he cried. "Before you came you had taken an old man's life; now you are dealing a deadly blow at a whole family. Whatever happens, there must be unhappiness in this house."

"And if your daughter is happy?" asked the other, gazing steadily at the general.

The father made a superhuman effort for self-control. "If she is happy with you," he said, "she is not worth regretting."

Helene knelt timidly before her father.

"Father, I love and revere you," she said, "whether you lavish all the treasures of your kindness upon me or make me feel to the full the rigor of disgrace. But I entreat that your last words of farewell shall not be words of anger."

The general could not trust himself to look at her. The stranger came nearer; there was something half-diabolical, half-divine in the smile that he gave Helene.

"Angel of pity, you that do not shrink in horror from a murderer, come, since you persist in your resolution of intrusting your life to me."

"Inconceivable!" cried her father.

The marquise looked strangely at her daughter, opened her arms, and Helene fled to her in tears.

"Farewell," she said; "farewell, mother!" The stranger trembled as Helene, undaunted, made sign to him that she was ready. She kissed her father's hand; and, as if performing a duty, gave a hasty kiss to Moïna and little Abel, then she vanished with the murderer.

"Which way are they going?" exclaimed the general, listening to the footsteps of the two fugitives. "Madame," he turned to his wife, "I think I must be dreaming; there is

some mystery behind all this, I do not understand it; you must know what it means."

The marquise shivered.

"For some time past your daughter has grown extraordinarily romantic and strangely high-flown in her ideas. In spite of the pains I have taken to combat these tendencies in her character——"

"This will not do——" began the general; but fancying that he heard footsteps in the garden, he broke off to fling open the window.

"Helene!" he shouted.

His voice was lost in the darkness like a vain prophecy. The utterance of that name, to which there should never be answer any more, acted like a counter-spell; it broke the charm and set him free from the evil enchantment which lay upon him. It was as if some spirit passed over his face. He now saw clearly what had taken place, and cursed his incomprehensible weakness. A shiver of heat rushed from his heart to his head and feet; he became himself once more, terrible, thirsting for revenge. He raised a dreadful cry.

"Help!" he thundered; "help!"

He rushed to the bell-pull, pulled till the bells rang with a strange clamor of din, pulled till the cord gave way. The whole house was roused with a start. Still shouting, he flung open the windows that looked upon the street, called for the police, caught up his pistols, and fired them off to hurry the mounted patrols, the newly aroused servants, and the neighbors. The dogs barked at the sound of their master's voice; the horses neighed and stamped in their stalls. The quiet night was suddenly filled with hideous uproar. The general on the staircase, in pursuit of his daughter, saw the scared faces of the servants flocking from all parts of the house.

"My daughter!" he shouted. "Helene has been carried off. Search the garden! Keep a lookout on the road! Open the gates for the gendarmerie! Murder! Help!"

With the strength of fury he snapped the chain and let loose the great house-dog.

"Helene!" he cried; "Helene!"

The dog sprang out like a lion, barking furiously, and dashed into the garden, leaving the general far behind. A troop of horse came along the road at a gallop, and he flew to open the gates himself.

"Corporal!" he shouted, "cut off the retreat of Monsieur de Mauny's murderer. They have gone through my garden. Quick! Put a cordon of men to watch the ways by the Butte de Picardie. I will beat up the grounds, parks, and houses. The rest of you keep a lookout along the road," he ordered the servants; "form a chain between the barrier and Versailles. Forward, every man of you!"

He caught up the rifle which his man had brought out, and dashed into the garden.

"Find them!" he called to the dog.

An ominous baying came in answer from the distance, and he plunged in the direction from which the growl seemed to come.

It was seven o'clock in the morning; all the search made by gendarmes, servants, and neighbors had been fruitless, and the dog had not come back. The general entered the salon, empty now for him though the other three children were there; he was worn out with fatigue, and looked old already with that night's work.

"You have been very cold to your daughter," he said, turning his eyes on his wife. "And now this is all that is left to us of her," he added, indicating the embroidery frame, and the flower just begun. "Only just now she was there, and now she is lost—— lost!"

Tears followed; he hid his face in his hands, and for a few minutes he said no more; he could not bear the sight of the room, which so short a time ago had made a setting to a picture of the sweetest family happiness. The winter dawn was

struggling with the dying lamplight; the tapers burned down to their paper-wreaths and flared out; everything was all in keeping with the father's despair.

"This must be destroyed," he said after a pause, pointing to the tambour-frame. "I shall never bear to see anything again that reminds us of *her!*"

The terrible Christmas night when the marquis and his wife lost their oldest daughter, powerless to oppose the mysterious influence exercised by the man who involuntarily, as it were, stole Helene from them, was like a warning sent by Fate. The marquis was ruined by the failure of his stockbroker; he borrowed money on his wife's property, and lost it in the endeavor to retrieve his fortunes. Driven to desperate expedients, he left France. Six years went by. His family seldom had news of him; but a few days before Spain recognized the independence of the American Republics, he wrote that he was coming home.

So, one fine morning, it happened that several French merchants were on board a Spanish brig that lay a few leagues out from Bordeaux, impatient to reach their native land again, with wealth acquired by long years of toil and perilous adventures in Venezuela and Mexico.

One of the passengers, a man who looked aged by trouble rather than by years, was leaning against the bulwark netting, apparently quite unaffected by the sight to be seen from the upper deck. The bright day, the sense that the voyage was safely over, had brought all the passengers above to greet their native land. The larger number of them insisted that they could see, far off in the distance, the houses and lighthouses on the coast of Gascony and the Tower of Cordouan, melting into the fantastic erections of white cloud along the horizon. But for the silver fringe that played about their bows and the long furrow swiftly effaced in their wake, they might have been perfectly still in mid-ocean, so calm was the sea. The sky was magically clear, the dark blue of the vault above

paled by imperceptible gradations, until it blended with the bluish water, a gleaming line that sparkled like stars marking the dividing line of sea. The sunlight caught myriads of facets over the wide surface of the ocean, in such a sort that the vast plain of salt water looked perhaps more full of light than the fields of sky.

The brig had set all her canvas. The snowy sails, swelled by the strangely soft wind, the labyrinth of cordage, and the yellow flags flying at the masthead, all stood out sharp and uncompromisingly clear against the vivid background of space, sky, and sea; there was nothing to alter the color but the shadow cast by the great cloudlike sails.

A glorious day, a fair wind, and the fatherland in sight, a sea like a mill-pond, the melancholy sound of the ripples, a fair solitary vessel, gliding across the surface of the water like a woman stealing out to a tryst—it was a picture full of harmony. That mere speck full of movement was a starting-point whence the soul of man could descry the immutable vastness of space. Solitude and bustling life, silence and sound, were all brought together in strange abrupt contrast; you could not tell where life, or sound, or silence, and nothingness lay, and no human voice broke the divine spell.

The Spanish captain, the crew, and the French passengers sat or stood in a mood of devout ecstasy, in which many memories blended. There was idleness in the air. The beaming faces told of complete forgetfulness of past hardships, the men were rocked on the fair vessel as in a golden dream. Yet, from time to time the elderly passenger, leaning over the bulwark nettings, looked with something like uneasiness at the horizon. Distrust of the ways of Fate could be read in his whole face; he seemed to fear that he should not reach the coast of France in time. This was the marquis. Fortune had not been deaf to his despairing cry and struggles. After five years of endeavor and painful toil, he was a wealthy man once more. In his impatience to reach his home again and

to bring the good news to his family, he had followed the example set by some French merchants in Havana, and embarked with them on a Spanish vessel with a cargo for Bordeaux. And now, grown tired of evil forebodings, his fancy was tracing out for him the most delicious pictures of past happiness. In that far-off brown line of land he seemed to see his wife and children. He sat in his place by the fireside; they were crowding about him; he felt their caresses. Moïna had grown to be young girl; she was beautiful, and tall, and striking. The fancied picture had grown almost real, when the tears filled his eyes, and, to hide his emotion, he turned his face toward the sea-line, opposite the hazy streak that meant land.

"There she is again—— She is following us!" he said.

"What?" cried the Spanish captain.

"There is a vessel," muttered the general.

"I saw her yesterday," answered Captain Gomez. He looked at his interlocutor as if to ask what he thought; then he added, in the general's ear, "She has been chasing us all along."

"Then why she has not come up with us, I do not know," said the general, "for she is a faster sailer than your damned Saint-Ferdinand."

"She will have damaged herself, sprung a leak——"

"She is gaining on us!" the general broke in.

"She is a Colombian privateer," the captain said in his ear, "and we are still six leagues from land, and the wind is dropping."

"She is not *going* ahead, she is flying, as if she knew that in two hours' time her prey would escape her. What audacity!"

"Audacity!" cried the captain. "Oh! she is not called the Othello for nothing. Not so long back she sank a Spanish frigate that carried thirty guns! This is the one thing I was afraid of, for I had a notion that she was cruising about some-

where off the Antilles. Aha!" he added after a pause, as he watched the sails of his own vessel, "the wind is rising; we are making away. Get through we must, for 'the Parisian' will show us no mercy."

"She is making way, too!" returned the general.

The Othello was scarce three leagues away by this time; and although the conversation between the marquis and Captain Gomez had taken place apart, passengers and crew, attracted by the sudden appearance of a sail, came to that side of the vessel. With scarcely an exception, however, they took the privateer for a merchantman, and watched her course with interest, till at once a sailor shouted with some energy of language—

"By Saint-Jacques, it is all up with us! Yonder is the Parisian captain!"

At that terrible name dismay, and a panic impossible to describe, spread through the brig. The Spanish captain's orders put energy into the crew for a while; and in his resolute determination to make land at all costs, he set all the studding sails and crowded on every stitch of canvas on board. But all this was not the work of a moment; and naturally the men did not work together with that wonderful unanimity so fascinating to watch on board a man-of-war. The Othello meanwhile, thanks to the trimming of her sails, flew over the water like a swallow; but she was making, to all appearance, so little headway, that the unlucky Frenchman began to entertain sweet delusive hopes. At last, after unheard-of efforts, the Saint-Ferdinand sprang forward, Gomez himself directing the shifting of the sheets with voice and gesture, when all at once the man at the tiller, steering at random (purposely, no doubt), swung the vessel round. The wind striking athwart the beam, the sails shivered so unexpectedly that the brig heeled to one side, the booms were carried away, and the vessel was completely out of hand. The captain's face grew whiter than his sails with unutterable

rage. He sprang upon the man at the tiller, drove his dagger at him in such blind fury, that he missed him, and hurled the weapon overboard. Gomez took the helm himself, and strove to right the gallant vessel. Tears of despair rose to his eyes, for it is harder to lose the result of our carefully laid plans through treachery than to face imminent death. But the more the captain swore, the less the men worked, and it was he himself who fired the alarm-gun, hoping to be heard on shore. The privateer, now gaining hopelessly upon them, replied with a cannon-shot, which struck the water ten fathoms away from the Saint-Ferdinand.

"Thunder of heaven!" cried the general, "that was a close shave! They must have guns made on purpose."

"Oh! when that one yonder speaks, look you, you have to hold your tongue," said a sailor. "The Parisian would not be afraid to meet an English man-of-war."

"It is all over with us," the captain cried in desperation; he had pointed his telescope landward, and saw not a sign from the shore. "We are further from the coast than I thought."

"Why do you despair?" asked the general. "All your passengers are Frenchmen; they have chartered your vessel. The privateer is a Parisian, you say? Well and good, run up the white flag, and——"

"And he would run us down," retorted the captain. "He can be anything he likes when he has a mind to seize on a rich booty!"

"Oh! if he is a pirate——"

"Pirate!" said the ferocious-looking sailor. "Oh! he always has the law on his side, or he knows how to be on the same side as the law."

"Very well," said the general, raising his eyes, "let us make up our minds to it," and his remaining fortitude was still sufficient to keep back the tears.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before a second

cannon-shot, better aimed came crashing through the hull of the Saint-Ferdinand.

"Heave to!" cried the captain gloomily.

The sailor who had commended the Parisian's law-abiding proclivities showed himself a clever hand at working a ship after this desperate order was given. The crew waited for half an hour in an agony of suspense and the deepest dismay. The Saint-Ferdinand had four millions of piastres on board, the whole fortunes of the five passengers, and the general's eleven hundred thousand francs. At length the Othello lay not ten gunshots away, so that those on the Saint-Ferdinand could look into the muzzles of her loaded guns. The vessel seemed to be borne along by a breeze sent by the devil himself, but the eyes of an expert would have discovered the secret of her speed at once. You had but to look for a moment at the rake of her stern, her long, narrow keel, her tall masts, to see the cut of her sails, the wonderful lightness of her rigging, and the ease and perfect seamanship with which her crew trimmed her sails to the wind. Everything about her gave the impression of the security of power in this delicately curved inanimate creature, swift and intelligent as a greyhound or some bird of prey. The privateer crew stood silent, ready in case of resistance to shatter the wretched merchantman, which, luckily for her, remained motionless, like a schoolboy caught in the act of doing wrong by a master.

"We have guns on board!" cried the general, clutching the Spanish captain's hand. But the courage in Gomez's eyes was the courage of despair.

"Have we men?" he said.

The marquis looked round at the crew of the Saint Ferdinand, and a cold chill ran through him. There stood the four merchants, pale and quaking for fear, while the crew gathered about some of their own number who appeared to be arranging to go over in a body to the enemy. They watched the Othello with greed and curiosity on their faces. The cap-

tain, the marquis, and the mate exchanged glances; they were the only three who had a thought for any but themselves.

"Ah! Captain Gomez, when I left my home and country, my heart was half dead with the bitterness of parting, and now must I bid it good-by once more when I am bringing back happiness and ease for my children?"

The general turned his head away toward the sea with tears of rage in his eyes—and saw the steersman swimming out to the privateer.

"This time it will be good-by for good," said the captain by way of answer, and the dazed look in the Spaniard's eyes startled the Frenchman.

By this time the two vessels were almost alongside, and at the first sight of the enemy's crew the general saw that Gomez's gloomy prophecy was only too true. The three men at each gun might have been bronze statues, standing like athletes, with their rugged features, their bare, sinewy arms, strong men whom Death himself had scarcely thrown off their feet.

The rest of the crew, well armed, active, light, and vigorous, also stood motionless. Toil had hardened and the sun had deeply tanned those energetic faces; their eyes glittered like sparks of fire with infernal glee and clear-sighted courage. Perfect silence on the upper deck, now black with men, bore abundant testimony to the rigorous discipline and strong will which held these fiends incarnate in check.

The captain of the Othello stood with folded arms at the foot of the mainmast; he carried no weapons, but an axe lay on the deck beside him. His face was hidden by the shadow of a broad, felt hat. The men looked like dogs crouching before their master. Gunners, soldiers, and ship's crew turned their eyes first on his face and then on the merchant vessel.

The two brigs came up alongside, and the shock of contact

roused the privateer captain from his musings; he spoke a word in the ear of the lieutenant who stood beside him.

"Grappling irons!" shouted the latter, and the Othello grappled the Saint-Ferdinand with miraculous quickness. The captain of the privateer gave his orders in a low voice to the lieutenant, who repeated them; the men, told off in succession for each duty, went on the upper deck of the Saint-Ferdinand, like seminarists going to mass. They bound crew and passengers hand and foot and seized the booty. In the twinkling of an eye, provisions and barrels full of piastres were transferred to the Othello; the general thought that he must be dreaming when he himself, likewise bound, was flung down on a bale of goods as if he had been part of the cargo.

A brief conference took place between the captain of the privateer and his lieutenant and a sailor, who seemed to be the mate of the vessel; then the mate gave a whistle, and the men jumped on board the Saint-Ferdinand and completely dismantled her with the nimble dexterity of a soldier who strips a dead comrade of a coveted overcoat and shoes.

"It is all over with us," said the Spanish captain coolly. He had eyed the three chiefs during their confabulation, and saw that the sailors were proceeding to pull his vessel to pieces.

"Why so?" asked the general.

"What would you have them do with us?" returned the Spaniard. "They have just come to the conclusion that they will scarcely sell the Saint-Ferdinand in any French or Spanish port, so they are going to sink her to be rid of her. And as for us, do you suppose that they will put themselves to the expense of feeding us, when they don't know what port they are to put into?"

The words were scarcely out of the captain's mouth before a hideous outcry went up, followed by a dull splashing sound, as several bodies were thrown overboard. He turned, the four merchants were no longer to be seen, but eight ferocious-

looking gunners were still standing with their arms raised above their heads. He shuddered.

"What did I tell you?" the Spanish captain asked very coolly.

The marquis rose to his feet with a spring. The surface of the sea was quite smooth again; he could not so much as see the place where his unhappy fellow-passengers had disappeared. By this time they were sinking down, bound hand and foot, below the waves, if, indeed, the fish had not devoured them already.

Only a few paces away, the treacherous steersman and the sailor who had boasted of the Parisian's power were fraternizing with the crew of the Othello, and pointing out those among their own number who, in their opinion, were worthy to join the crew of the privateer. Then the boys tied the rest together by the feet in spite of frightful oaths. It was soon over; the eight gunners seized the doomed men and flung them overboard without more ado, watching the different ways in which the drowning victims met their death, their contortions, their last agony, with a sort of malignant curiosity, but with no sign of amusement, surprise, or pity. For them it was an ordinary event to which seemingly they were quite accustomed. The older men looked instead with grim, set smiles at the casks of piastres about the mainmast.

The general and Captain Gomez, left seated on a bale of goods, consulted each other with well-nigh hopeless looks; they were, in a sense, the sole survivors of the Saint-Ferdinand, for the seven men pointed out by the spies were transformed amid rejoicings into Peruvians.

"What atrocious villains!" the general cried. Loyal and generous indignation silenced prudence and pain on his own account.

"They do it because they must," Captain Gomez answered coolly. "If you came across one of those fellows, you would run him through the body, would you not?"

The lieutenant now came up to the Spaniard.

"Captain," said he, "the Parisian has heard of you. He says that you are the only man who really knows the passages of the Antilles and the Brazilian coast. Will you——"

The captain cut him sort with a scornful exclamation.

"I shall die like a sailor," he said, "and a loyal Spaniard and a Christian. Do you hear?"

"Heave him overboard," shouted the lieutenant, and a couple of gunners seized on Gomez.

"You cowards!" roared the general, seizing hold of the men.

"Don't get too excited, old boy," said the lieutenant. "If your red ribbon has made some impression upon our captain, I myself do not care a rap for it. You and I will have our little bit of talk together directly."

A smothered sound, with no accompanying cry, told the general that the gallant captain had died "like a sailor," as he had said.

"My money or death!" cried the marquis, in a fit of rage terrible to see.

"Ah! now you talk sensibly!" sneered the lieutenant. "That is the way to get something out of us——"

Two of the men came up at a sign and hastened to bind the Frenchman's feet, but with unlooked-for boldness he snatched the lieutenant's cutlass and laid about him like a cavalry officer who knows his business.

"Brigands that you are! You shall not chuck one of Napoleon's old troopers over a ship's side like an oyster!"

At the sound of pistol-shots fired point-blank at the Frenchman, "the Parisian" looked round from his occupation of superintending the transfer of the rigging from the Saint-Ferdinand. He came up behind the brave general, seized him, dragged him to the side, and was about to fling him over with no more concern than if the man had been a broken spar. They were at the very edge when the general

looked into the tawny eyes of the man who had stolen his daughter. The recognition was mutual.

The captain of the privateer, his arm still upraised, suddenly swung it in the contrary direction as if his victim was but a feather weight, and set him down at the foot of the main-mast. A murmur rose on the upper deck, but the captain glanced round, and there was a sudden silence.

"This is Helene's father," said the captain in a clear, firm voice. "Woe to any one who meddles with him!"

A hurrah of joy went up at the words, a shout rising to the sky like a prayer of the church; a cry like the first high-notes of the *Te Deum.* The lads swung aloft in the rigging, the men below flung up their caps, the gunners pounded away on the deck, there was a general thrill of excitement, an outburst of oaths, yells, and shrill cries in voluble chorus. The men cheered like fanatics, the general's misgivings deepened, and he grew uneasy; it seemed to him that there was some horrible mystery in such wild transports.

"My daughter!" he cried, as soon as he could speak. "Where is my daughter?"

For all answer, the captain of the privateer gave him a searching glance, one of those glances which throw the bravest men into a confusion which no theory can explain. The general was mute, not a little to the satisfaction of the crew; it pleased them to see their leader exercise the strange power which he possessed over all with whom he came in contact. Then the captain led the way down a staircase and flung open the door of a cabin.

"There she is," he said, and disappeared, leaving the general in a stupor of bewilderment at the scene before his eyes.

Helene cried out at the sight of him, and sprang up from the sofa on which she was lying when the door flew open. So changed was she that none but a father's eyes could have recognized her. The sun of the tropics had brought warmer

tones into the once pale face, and something of Oriental charm with that wonderful coloring; there was a certain grandeur about her, a majestic firmness, a profound sentiment which impresses itself upon the coarsest nature. Her long, thick hair, falling in large curls about her queenly throat, gave an added idea of power to the proud face. The consciousness of that power shone out from every movement, every line of Helene's form. The rose-tinted nostrils were dilated slightly with the joy of triumph; the serene happiness of her life had left its plain tokens in the full development of her beauty. A certain indefinable virginal grace met in her with the pride of a woman who is loved. This was a slave and a queen, a queen who would fain obey that she might reign.

Her dress was magnificent and elegant in its richness; India muslin was the sole material, but her sofa and cushions were of cashmere. A Persian carpet covered the floor in the large cabin, and her four children playing at her feet were building castles of gems and pearl necklaces and jewels of price. The air was full of the scent of rare flowers in Sèvres porcelain vases painted by Mme. Jacotot; tiny South American birds, like living rubies, sapphires, and gold, hovered among the Mexican jessamines and camellias. A pianforte had been fitted into the room, and here and there on the paneled walls, covered with red silk, hung small pictures by great painters—a Sunset by Hippolyte Schinner beside a Terburg, one of Raphael's Madonnas scarcely yielded in charm to a sketch by Géricault, while a Gerard Dow eclipsed the painters of the Empire. On a lacquered table stood a golden plate full of delicious fruit. Indeed, Helene might have been the sovereign lady of some great country, and this cabin of hers a boudoir in which her crowned lover had brought together all earth's treasures to please his consort. The children gazed with bright, keen eyes at their grandfather. Accustomed as they were to a life of battle, storm, and tumult, they recalled

the Roman children in David's Brutus, watching the fighting and bloodshed with curious interest.

"What! is it possible?" cried Helene, catching her father's arm as if to assure herself that this was no vision.

"Helene!"

"Father!"

They fell into each other's arms, and the old man's embrace was not so close and warm as Helene's.

"Were you on board that vessel?"

"Yes," he answered sadly, and looking at the little ones, who gathered about him and gazed with wide-open eyes.

"I was about to perish, but——"

"But for my husband," she broke in. "I see how it was."

"Ah!" cried the general, "why must I find you again like this, Helene? After all the many tears that I have shed, must I still groan for your fate?"

"And why?" she asked smiling. "Why should you be sorry to learn that I am the happiest woman under the sun?"

"*Happy?*" he cried, with a start of surprise.

"Yes, happy, my kind father," and she caught his hands in hers and covered them with kisses, and pressed them to her throbbing heart. Her caresses and a something in the carriage of her head were interpreted yet more plainly by the joy sparkling in her eyes.

"And how is this?" he asked, wondering at his daughter's life, forgetful now of everything but the bright glowing face before him.

"Listen, father, I have for lover, husband, servant, and master one whose soul is as great as the boundless sea, as infinite in his kindness as heaven, a god on earth! Never during these seven years has a chance look, or word, or gesture jarred in the divine harmony of his talk, his love, his caresses. His eyes have never met mine without a gleam of happiness in them; there has always been a bright smile on his lips for me. On deck, his voice rises above the thunder

of storms and the tumult of battle; but here below it is soft and melodious as Rossini's music—for he has Rossini's music sent for me. I have everything that woman's caprice can imagine. My wishes are more than fulfilled. In short, I am a queen on the seas; I am obeyed here as perhaps a queen may be obeyed. Ah!" she cried, interrupting herself, "*happy* did I say? Happiness is no word to express such bliss as mine. All the happiness that should have fallen to all the women in the world has been my share. Knowing one's own great love and self-devotion, to find in *his* heart an infinite love in which a woman's soul is lost, and lost for ever —tell me, is this happiness? I have lived through a thousand lives even now. Here, I am alone; here I command. No other woman has set foot on this noble vessel, and Victor is never more than a few paces distant from me, he cannot wander further from me than from stern to prow," she added, with a shade of mischief in her manner. "Seven years! A love that outlasts seven years of continual joy, that endures all the tests brought by all the moments that make up seven years—is this love? Oh, no, no! it is something better than all that I know of life —— human language fails to express the bliss of heaven."

A sudden torrent of tears fell from her burning eyes. The four little ones raised a piteous cry at this, and flocked like chickens about their mother. The oldest boy struck the general with a threatening look.

"Abel, darling," said Helene, "I am crying for joy."

Helene took him on her knee, and the child fondled her, putting his arms about her queenly neck, as a lion's whelp might play with the lioness.

"Do you never weary of your life?" asked the general, bewildered by his daughter's enthusiastic language.

"Yes," she said, "sometimes, when we are on land, yet even then I have never parted from my husband."

"But you used to be fond of music and balls and fêtes."

"His voice is music for me; and for fêtes, I devise new toilets for him to see. When he likes my dress, it is as if all the world admired me. Simply for that reason I keep the diamonds and jewels, the precious things, the flowers and masterpieces of art that he heaps upon me, saying, 'Helene, as you live out of the world, I will have the world come to you.' But for that I would fling them all overboard."

"But there are others on board, wild, reckless men, whose passions——"

"I understand, father," she said, smiling. "Do not fear for me. Never was empress encompassed with more observance than I. The men are very superstitious; they look upon me as a sort of tutelary genius, the luck of the vessel. But *he* is their god; they worship him. Once, and once only, one of the crew showed disrespect, mere words," she added, laughing; "but before Victor knew of it, the others flung the offender overboard, although I forgave him. They love me as their good angel; I nurse them when they are ill; several times I have been so fortunate as to save a life, by constant care such as a woman can give. Poor fellows, they are giants, but they are children at the same time."

"And when there is fighting overhead?"

"I am used to it now; I quaked for fear during the first engagement, but never since. I am used to such peril, and—I am your daughter," she said; "I love it."

"But how if he should fall?"

"I should die with him."

"And your children?"

"They are children of the sea and of danger; they share the life of their parents. We have but one life, and we do not flinch from it. We have but the one life, our names are written on the same page of the book of Fate, one skiff bears us and our fortunes, and we know it."

"Do you so love him that he is more to you than all beside?"

"All beside?" echoed she. "Let us leave that mystery alone. Yet stay! there is this dear little one—well, this too is *he*," and straining Abel to her in a tight clasp, she set eager kisses on his cheeks and hair.

"But I can never forget that he has just drowned nine men!" exclaimed the general.

"There was no help for it, doubtless," she said, "for he is generous and humane. He sheds as little blood as may be, and only in the interests of the little world which he defends and the sacred cause for which he is fighting. Talk to him about anything that seems to you to be wrong, and he will convince you, you will see."

"There was that crime of his," muttered the general to himself.

"But how if that crime was a virtue?" she asked, with cold dignity. "How if man's justice had failed to avenge a great wrong?"

"But a private revenge!" exclaimed her father.

"But what is hell," she cried, "but a revenge through all eternity for the wrong done in a little day?"

"Ah! you are lost! He has bewitched and perverted you. You are talking wildly."

"Stay with us one day, father, and if you will but listen to him, and see him, you will love him."

"Helene, France lies only a few leagues away," he said gravely.

Helene trembled; then she went over to the port-hole and pointed to the savannas of green water spreading far and wide before them.

"There lies my country," she said, tapping the carpet with her foot.

"But are you not coming with me to see your mother and your sister and brothers?"

"Oh! yes," she cried, with tears in her voice, "if *he* is willing, if he will come with me."

"So," the general said sternly, "you have neither country nor kin now, Helene?"

"I am his wife," she answered proudly, and there was something very noble in her tone. "This is the first happiness in seven years that has not come to me through him," she said—then, as she caught her father's hand and kissed it—"and this is the first word of reproach that I have heard."

"And your conscience?"

"My conscience; he is my conscience!" she cried, trembling from head to foot. "Here he is! Even in the thick of a fight I can tell his footstep among all the others on deck," she cried.

A sudden crimson flushed her cheeks and glowed in her features, her eyes lighted up, her complexion changed to velvet whiteness; there was joy and love in every fibre, in the blue veins, in the unconscious trembling of her whole frame. That quiver of the sensitive plant softened the general.

It was as she had said. The captain came in, sat down in an easy-chair, took up his oldest boy, and began to play with him. There was a moment's silence, for the general's deep musing had grown vague and dreamy, and the daintily furnished cabin and the playing children seemed like a nest of halcyons, floating on the waves, between sky and sea, safe in the protection of this man who steered his way amid perils of war and tempest, as other heads of households guide those in their care among the hazards of common life. He gazed admiringly at Helene—a dreamlike vision of some sea goddess, gracious in her loveliness, rich in happiness; all the treasures about her grown poor in comparison with the wealth of her nature, paling before the brightness of her eyes, the indefinable romance expressed in her and her surroundings.

The strangeness of the situation took the general by surprise; the ideas of ordinary life were thrown into confusion by this lofty passion and reasoning. Chill and narrow social conventions faded away before this picture. All these things

the old soldier felt, and saw no less how impossible it was that his daughter should give up so wide a life, a life so variously rich, filled to the full with such passionate love. And Helene had tasted danger without shrinking; how could she return to the petty stage, the superficial circumscribed life of society?

It was the captain who broke the silence at last.

"Am I in the way?" he asked, looking at his wife.

"No," said the general, answering for her. "Helene has told me all. I see that she is lost to us——"

"No," the captain put in quickly; "in a few years' time the statute of limitations will allow me to go back to France. When the conscience is clear, and a man has broken the law in obedience to——" he stopped short, as if scorning to justify himself.

"How can you commit new murders, such as I have seen with my own eyes, without remorse?"

"We had no provisions," the privateer captain retorted calmly.

"But if you had set the men ashore——"

"They would have given the alarm and sent a man-of-war after us, and we should never have seen Chili [Peru] again."

"Before France would have given warning to the Spanish admiralty——" began the general.

"But France might take it amiss that a man, with a warrant still out against him, should seize a brig chartered by Bordeaux merchants. And for that matter, have you never fired a shot or so too many in battle?"

The general shrank under the other's eyes. He said no more, and his daughter looked at him half-sadly, half-triumphantly.

"General," the privateer continued, in a deep voice, "I have made it a rule to abstract nothing from booty. But even so, my share will, beyond a doubt, be far larger than your fortune. Permit me to return it to you in another form——"

He drew a pile of bank-notes from the piano, and without counting the packets handed a million of francs to the marquis.

"You can understand," he said, "that I cannot spend my time in watching vessels pass by to Bordeaux. So unless the dangers of this Bohemian life of ours have some attraction for you, unless you care to see South America and the nights of the tropics, and a bit of fighting now and again for the pleasure of helping to win a triumph for a young nation, or for the name of Simon Bolivar, we must part. The long-boat, manned with a trustworthy crew, is ready for you. And now let us hope that our third meeting will be completely happy."

"Victor," said Helene in a dissatisfied tone, "I should like to see a little more of my father."

"Ten minutes more or less may bring up a French frigate. However, so be it, we shall have a little fun. The men find things dull."

"Oh, father, go!" cried Helene, "and take these keepsakes from me to my sister and brothers and—mother," she added. She caught up a handful of jewels and precious stones, folded them in an Indian shawl, and timidly held it out.

"But what shall I say to them from you?" asked he. Her hesitation on the word "mother" seemed to have struck him.

"Oh! can you doubt me? I pray for their happiness every day."

"Helene," he began, as he watched her closely, "how if we should not meet again? Shall I never know why you left us?"

"That secret is not mine," she answered gravely. "Even if I had the right to tell it, perhaps I should not. For ten years I was more miserable than words can say——"

She broke off, and gave her father the presents for her family. The general had acquired tolerably easy views as to

A VAST COLUMN OF SMOKE RISING SPREAD LIKE BROWN CLOUD.

booty in the course of a soldier's career, so he took Helene's gifts and comforted himself with the reflection that the Parisian captain was sure to wage war against the Spaniards as an honorable man, under the influence of Helene's pure and high-minded nature. His passion for courage carried all before it. It was ridiculous, he thought, to be squeamish in the matter; so he shook hands cordially with his captor, and kissed Helene, his only daughter, with a soldier's expansiveness; letting fall a tear on the face with the proud, strong look that once he had loved to see. "The Parisian," deeply moved, brought the children for his blessing. The parting was over, the last good-by was a long farewell-look, with something of tender regret on either side.

A strange sight to seaward met the general's eyes. The Saint-Ferdinand was blazing like a huge bonfire. The men told off to sink the Spanish brig had found a cargo of rum on board; and, as the Othello was already amply supplied, had lighted a floating bowl of punch on the high-seas, by way of a joke; a pleasantry pardonable enough in sailors, who hail any chance excitement as a relief from the apparent monotony of life at sea. As the general went over the side into the long-boat of the Saint-Ferdinand, manned by six vigorous rowers, he could not help looking at the burning vessel, as well as at the daughter who stood by her husband's side on the stern of the Othello. He saw Helene's white dress flutter like one more sail in the breeze; he saw the tall, noble figure against a background of sea, queenly still even in the presence of Ocean; and so many memories crowded up in his mind, that, with a soldier's recklessness of life, he forgot that he was being borne over the grave of the brave Gomez.

A vast column of smoke rising spread like a brown cloud, pierced here and there by fantastic shafts of sunlight. It was a second sky, a murky dome reflecting the glow of the fire as

if the under surface had been burnished; but above it soared the unchanging blue of the firmament, a thousand times fairer for the short-lived contrast. The strange hues of the smoke-cloud, black and red, tawny and pale by turns, blurred and blending into each other, shrouded the burning vessel as it flared, crackled, and groaned; the hissing tongues of flame licked up the rigging and flashed across the hull, like a rumor of riot flashing along the streets of a city. The burning rum sent up blue flitting lights. Some sea god might have been stirring the furious liquor as a student stirs the joyous flames of punch in an orgie. But in the overpowering sunlight, jealous of the insolent blaze, the colors were scarcely visible, and the smoke was but a film fluttering like a thin scarf in the noonday torrent of light and heat.

The Othello made the most of the little wind she could gain to fly on her new course. Swaying first to one side, then to the other, like a stag-beetle on the wing, the fair vessel beat to windward on her zigzag flight to the south. Sometimes she was hidden from sight by the straight column of smoke that flung fantastic shadows across the water, then gracefully she shot out clear of it, and Helene, catching sight of her father, again waved her handkerchief for yet one more farewell greeting.

A few more minutes, and the Saint-Ferdinand went down with a bubbling turmoil, at once effaced by the ocean. Nothing of all that had been was left but a smoke-cloud hanging in the breeze. The Othello was far away, the long-boat had almost reached land, the cloud came between the frail skiff and the brig, and it was through a break in the swaying smoke that the general caught the last glimpse of Helene. A prophetic vision! Her dress and her white handkerchief stood out against the murky background. Then the brig was not even visible between the green water and the blue sky, and Helene was nothing but an imperceptible speck, a faint graceful line, an angel in heaven, a mental image, a memory.

The marquis had retrieved his fortunes, when he died, worn out with toil. A few months after his death, in 1833, the marquise was obliged to take Moïna to a watering-place in the Pyrenees, for the capricious child had a wish to see the beautiful mountain scenery. They left the baths, and the following tragical incident occurred on their way home.

"Dear me, mother," said Moïna, "it was very foolish of us not to stay among the mountains a few days longer. It was much nicer there. Did you hear that horrid child moaning all night, and that wretched woman, gabbling away in patois no doubt, for I could not understand a single word she said. What kind of people can they have put in the next room to ours? This is one of the most horrid nights I have ever spent in my life."

"I heard nothing," said the marquise, "but I will see the landlady, darling, and engage the next room, and then we shall have the whole suite of rooms to ourselves, and there will be no more noise. How do you feel this morning? Are you tired?"

As she spoke, the marquise rose and went to Moïna's bedside.

"Let us see," she said, feeling for the girl's hand.

"Oh! let me alone, mother," said Moïna; "your fingers are cold."

She turned her head round on the pillow as she spoke, pettishly, but with such engaging grace, that a mother could scarcely have taken it amiss. Just then a wailing cry echoed through the next room, a faint prolonged cry, that must surely have gone to the heart of any woman who heard it.

"Why, if you heard *that* all night long, why did you not wake me? We should have——"

A deeper moan than any that had gone before it interrupted the marquise.

"Some one is dying there," she cried, and hurried out of the room.

"Send Pauline to me!" called Moïna. "I shall get up and dress."

The marquise hastened downstairs, and found the landlady in the courtyard with a little group of people about her, apparently much interested in something that she was telling them.

"Madame, you have put some one in the next room who seems to be very ill indeed——"

"Oh! don't talk to me about it!" cried the mistress of the house. "I have just sent some one for the mayor. Just imagine it; it is a woman, a poor unfortunate creature that came here last night on foot. She comes from Spain; she has no passport and no money; she was carrying her baby on her back, and the child was dying. I could not refuse to take her in. I went up to see her this morning myself; for when she turned up yesterday, it made me feel dreadfully bad to look at her. Poor soul! she and the child were lying in bed, and both of them at death's door. 'Madame,' says she, pulling a gold ring off her finger, 'this is all that I have left; take it in payment, it will be enough; I shall not stay here long. Poor little one! we shall die together soon!' she said, looking at the child. I took her ring, and I asked her who she was, but she never would tell me her name. I have just sent for the doctor and Monsieur le Maire."

"Why you must do all that can be done for her," cried the marquise. "Good heavens! perhaps it is not too late! I will pay for everything that is necessary——"

"Ah! my lady, she looks to me to be uncommonly proud, and I don't know that she would allow it."

"I will go to see her at once."

The marquise went up forthwith to the stranger's room, without thinking of the shock that the sight of her widow's weeds might give to a woman who was said to be dying. At the sight of that dying woman the marquise turned pale. In

spite of the changes wrought by fearful suffering in Helene's beautiful face, she recognized her eldest daughter.

But Helene, when she saw a woman dressed in black, sat upright in bed with a shriek of horror. Then she sank back; she knew her mother.

"My daughter," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, "what is to be done? Pauline!—— Moïna!——"

"Nothing now for me," said Helene faintly. "I had hoped to see my father once more, but your mourning——" she broke off, clutched her child to her heart as if to give it warmth, and kissed its forehead. Then she turned her eyes on her mother, and the marquise met the old reproach in them, tempered with forgiveness, it is true, but still reproach. She saw it, and would not see it. She forgot that Helene was the child conceived amid tears and despair, the child of duty, the cause of one of the greatest sorrows in her life. She stole to her eldest daughter's side, remembering nothing but that Helene was her firstborn, the child who had taught her to know the joys of motherhood. The mother's eyes were full of tears. "Helene, my child!——" she cried, with her arms about her daughter.

Helene was silent. Her own babe had just drawn its last breath on her breast.

Moïna came into the room with Pauline, her maid, and the landlady and the doctor. The marquise was holding her daughter's ice-cold hand in both of hers, and gazing at her in despair; but the widowed woman, who had escaped shipwreck with but one of all her fair band of children, spoke in a voice that was dreadful to hear. "All this is your work," she said. "If you had but been for me, all that——"

"Moïna, go! Go out of the room, all of you!" cried Mme. d'Aiglemont, her shrill tone drowning Helene's voice. "For pity's sake," she continued, "let us not begin these miserable quarrels again now——"

"I will be silent," Helene answered with a preternatural

effort. "I am a mother, I know that Moïna ought not, must not—— Where is my child?"

Moïna came back, impelled by curiosity.

"Sister," said the spoilt child, "the doctor——"

"It is all of no use," said Helene. "Oh! why did I not die as a girl of sixteen when I meant to take my own life? There can be no happiness outside the laws. Moïna—— you——"

Her head sank till her face lay against the face of the little one; in her agony she strained her babe to her breast, and died.

"Your sister, Moïna," said Mme. d'Aiglemont, bursting into tears when she reached her room, "your sister meant no doubt to tell you that a girl will never find happiness in a romantic life, in living as nobody else does, and, above all things, far away from her mother."

VI.

THE OLD AGE OF A GUILTY MOTHER.

It was one of the earliest June days of the year 1844. A lady of fifty or thereabout, for she looked older than her actual age, was pacing up and down one of the sunny paths in the garden of a great mansion in the Rue Plumet in Paris. It was noon. The lady took two or three turns along the gently winding garden-walk, careful never to lose sight of a certain row of windows, to which she seemed to give her whole attention; then she sat down on a bench, a piece of elegant semi-rusticity made of branches with the bark left on the wood. From the place where she sat she could look through the garden railings along the inner boulevards to the wonderful dome of the Invalides rising above the crests of a forest of elm-trees, and see the less striking view of her own grounds terminating in the gray-stone front of one of the finest hotels in the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

Silence lay over the neighboring gardens and the boulevards stretching away to the Invalides. Day scarcely begins at noon in that aristocratic quarter, and masters and servants are all alike asleep, or just awakening, unless some young lady takes it into her head to go for an early ride, or a gray-headed diplomatist rises betimes to redraft a protocol.

The elderly lady stirring abroad at that hour was the Marquise d'Aiglemont, the mother of Mme. de Saint-Héreen, to whom the great house belonged. The marquise had made over the mansion and almost her whole fortune to her daughter, reserving only an annuity for herself.

The Comtesse Moïna de Saint-Héreen was Mme. d'Aiglemont's youngest child. The marquise had made every sacrifice to marry her daughter to the eldest son of one of the

greatest houses of France; and this was only what might have been expected, for the lady had lost her sons, first one and then the other. Gustave, Marquis d'Aiglemont, had died of the cholera; Abel, the second, had fallen in Algeria. Gustave had left a widow and children, but the dowager's affection for her sons had been only moderately warm, and for the next generation it was decidedly tepid. She was always civil to her daughter-in-law, but her feeling toward the young marquise was the distinctly conventional affection which good taste and good manners require us to feel for our relatives. The fortunes of her dead children having been settled, she could devote her savings and her own property to her darling Moïna.

Moïna, beautiful and fascinating from childhood, was Mme. d'Aiglemont's favorite; loved beyond all the others with an instinctive or involuntary love, a fatal drawing of the heart, which sometimes seems inexplicable, sometimes, and to a close observer, only too easy to explain. Her darling's pretty face, the sound of Moïna's voice, her ways, her manner, her looks and gestures, roused all the deepest emotions that can stir a mother's heart with trouble, rapture, or delight. The springs of the marquise's life, of yesterday, to-morrow, and to-day, lay in that young heart. Moïna, with better fortune, had survived four older children. As a matter of fact, Mme. d'Aiglemont had lost her eldest daughter, a charming girl, in a most unfortunate manner, said gossip, nobody knew exactly what became of her; and then she lost a little boy of five by a dreadful accident.

The child of her affections had, however, been spared to her, and doubtless the marquise saw the will of heaven in that fact; for of those who had died, she kept but very shadowy recollections in some far-off corner of her heart; her memories of her dead children were like the headstones on a battlefield, you can scarcely see them for the flowers that have sprung up about them since. Of course, if the world had

chosen, it might have said some hard truths about the marquise, might have taken her to task for shallowness and an overweening preference for one child at the expense of the rest; but the world of Paris is swept along by the full flood of new events, new ideas, and new fashions, and it was inevitable that Mme. d'Aiglemont should be in some sort allowed to drop out of sight. So nobody thought of blaming her for coldness or neglect which concerned no one, whereas her quick, apprehensive tenderness for Moïna was found highly interesting by not a few who respected it as a sort of superstition. Beside, the marquise scarcely went into society at all; and the few families who knew her thought of her as a kindly, gentle, indulgent woman, wholly devoted to her family. What but a curiosity, keen indeed, would seek to pry beneath the surface with which the world is quite satisfied? And what would we not pardon to old people, if only they will efface themselves like shadows, and consent to be regarded as memories and nothing more!

Indeed, Mme. d'Aiglemont became a kind of example complacently held up by the younger generation to fathers of families, and frequently cited to mothers-in-law. She had made over her property to Moïna in her own lifetime; the young countess' happiness was enough for her, she only lived in her daughter. If some cautious old person or morose uncle here and there condemned the course with—"Perhaps Madame d'Aiglemont may be sorry some day that she gave up her fortune to her daughter; she may be sure of Moïna, but how can she be equally sure of her son-in-law?"—these prophets were cried down on all sides, and from all sides a chorus of praise went up for Moïna.

"It ought to be said, in justice to Madame de Saint-Héreen, that her mother cannot feel the slightest difference," remarked a young married woman. "Madame d'Aiglemont is admirably well housed. She has a carriage at her disposal, and can go everywhere just as she used to do——"

"Except to the Italiens," remarked a low voice. (This was an elderly parasite, one of those persons who show their independence—as they think—by riddling their friends with epigrams.) "Except to the Italiens. And if the dowager cares for anything on this earth but her daughter—it is music. Such a good performer she was in her time! But the countess' box is always full of young butterflies, and the countess' mother would be in the way; the young lady is talked about already as a great flirt. So the poor mother never goes to the Italiens."

"Madame de Saint-Héreen has delightful 'At Homes' for her mother," said a rosebud. "All Paris goes to her salon."

"And no one pays any attention to the marquise," returned the parasite.

"The fact is that Madame d'Aiglemont is never alone," remarked a coxcomb, siding with the young women.

"In the morning," the old observer continued in a discreet voice, "in the morning dear Moïna is asleep. At four o'clock dear Moïna drives in the Bois. In the evening dear Moïna goes to a ball or to the Bouffes. Still, it is certainly true that Madame d'Aiglemont has the privilege of seeing her dear daughter while she dresses, and again at dinner, if dear Moïna happens to dine with her mother. Not a week ago, sir," continued the elderly person, laying his hand on the arm of the shy tutor, a new arrival in the house, "not a week ago, I saw the poor mother, solitary and sad, by her own fireside. 'What is the matter?' I asked. The marquise looked up smiling, but I am quite sure that she had been crying. 'I was thinking that it is a strange thing that I should be left alone when I have had five children,' she said, 'but that is our destiny! And, beside, I am happy when I know that Moïna is enjoying herself.' She could say that to me, for I knew her husband when he was alive. A poor stick he was, and uncommonly lucky to have such a wife; it was certainly

owing to her that he was made a peer of France, and had a place at Court under Charles X."

Yet such mistaken ideas get about in social gossip, and such mischief is done by it, that the historian of manners is bound to exercise his discretion, and weigh the assertions so recklessly made. After all, who is to say that either mother or daughter was right or wrong. There is but One who can read and judge their hearts! And how often does He wreak His vengeance in the family circle, using throughout all time children as his instruments against their mothers, and fathers against their sons, raising up peoples against kings, and princes against peoples, sowing strife and division everywhere? And in the world of ideas, are not old opinions and feelings expelled by new feelings and opinions, much as withered leaves are thrust forth by the young leaf-buds in the spring?—all in obedience to the immutable Scheme; all to some end which God alone knows. Yet, surely, all things proceed to Him, or rather, to Him all things return.

Such thoughts of religion, the natural thoughts of age, floated up now and again on the current of Mme. d'Aiglemont's thoughts; they were always dimly present in her mind, but sometimes they shone out clearly, sometimes they were carried under, like flowers tossed on the vexed surface of a stormy sea.

She sat on the garden-seat, tired with walking, exhausted with much thinking—with the long thoughts in which a whole lifetime rises up before the mind, and is spread out like a scroll before the eyes of those who feel that Death is near.

If a poet had chanced to pass along the boulevard, he would have found an interesting picture in the face of this woman, grown old before her time. As she sat under the dotted shadow of the acacia, the shadow the acacia casts at noon, a thousand thoughts were written for all the world to see on her features, pale and cold even in the hot, bright sunlight.

There was something sadder than the sense of waning life in that expressive face, some trouble that went deeper than the weariness of experience. It was a face of a type that fixes you in a moment among a host of characterless faces that fail to draw a second glance, a face to set you thinking. Among a thousand pictures in a gallery you are strongly impressed by the sublime anguish on the face of some Madonna of Murillo's; by some Beatrice Cenci in which Guido's art portrays the most touching innocence against a background of horror and crime; by the awe and majesty that should encircle a king, caught once and for ever by Velasquez in the sombre face of a Philip II., and so is it with some living human faces; they are tyrannous pictures which speak to you, submit you to searching scrutiny, and give response to your inmost thoughts, nay, there are faces that set forth a whole drama, and Mme. d'Aiglemont's stony face was one of these awful tragedies, one of such faces as Dante Alighieri saw by thousands in his vision.

For the little season that a woman's beauty is in flower it serves her admirably well in the dissimulation to which her natural weakness and our social laws condemn her. A young face and rich color, and eyes that glow with light, a gracious maze of such subtle, manifold lines and curves, flawless and perfectly traced, is a screen that hides everything that stirs the woman within. A flush tells nothing, it only heightens the coloring so brilliant already; all the fires that burn within can add little light to the flame of life in eyes which only seem the brighter for the flash of a passing pain. Nothing is so discreet as a young face, for nothing is less mobile; it has the serenity, the surface smoothness, and the freshness of a lake. There is no character in women's faces before the age of thirty. The painter discovers nothing there but pink and white, and the smile and expression that repeat the same thought in the same way—a thought of youth and love that goes no further than youth and love. But the face of an old woman has expressed

all that lay in her nature; passion has carved lines on her features; love and wifehood and motherhood, and extremes of joy and anguish, have wrung them, and left their traces in a thousand wrinkles, all of which speak a language of their own; then is it that a woman's face becomes sublime in its horror, beautiful in its melancholy, grand in its calm. If it is permissible to carry the strange metaphor still further, it might be said that in the dried-up lake you can see the traces of all the torrents that once poured into it and made it what it is. An old face is nothing to the frivolous world; the frivolous world is shocked by the sight of the destruction of such comeliness as it can understand; a commonplace artist sees nothing there. An old face is the province of the poets among poets of those who can recognize that something which is called Beauty, apart from all the conventions underlying so many superstitions in art and taste.

Though Mme. d'Aiglemont wore a fashionable bonnet, it was easy to see that her once black hair had been bleached by cruel sorrows; yet her good taste and the gracious acquired instincts of a woman of fashion could be seen in the way she wore it, divided into two bandeaux, following the outlines of a forehead that still retained some traces of former dazzling beauty, worn and lined though it was. The contours of her face, the regularity of her features, gave some idea, faint in truth, of that beauty of which surely she had once been proud; but those traces spoke still more plainly of the anguish which had laid it waste, of sharp pain that had withered the temples, and made those hollows in her cheeks, and empurpled the eyelids and robbed them of their lashes, and the eyes of their charm. She was in every way so noiseless; she moved with a slow, self-contained gravity that showed itself in her whole bearing, and struck a certain awe into others. Her diffident manner had changed to positive shyness, due apparently to a habit now of some years' growth, of effacing herself in her

daughter's presence. She spoke very seldom, and in the low tones used by those who perforce must live within themselves a life of reflection and concentration. This demeanor led others to regard her with an indefinable feeling which was neither awe nor compassion, but a mysterious blending of the many ideas awakened in us by compassion and awe. Finally, there was something in her wrinkles, in the lines of her face, in the look of pain in those wan eyes of hers, that bore eloquent testimony to tears that never had fallen, tears that had been absorbed by her heart. Unhappy creatures, accustomed to raise their eyes to heaven, in mute appeal against the bitterness of their lot, would have seen at once from her eyes that she was broken in to the cruel discipline of ceaseless prayer, would have discerned the almost imperceptible symptoms of the secret bruises which destroy all the flowers of the soul, even the sentiment of motherhood.

Painters have colors for these portraits, but words, and the mental images called up by words, fail to reproduce such impressions faithfully; there are mysterious signs and tokens in the tones of the coloring and in the look of human faces, which the mind only seizes through the sense of sight; and the poet is fain to record the tale of the events which wrought the havoc to make their terrible ravages understood.

The face spoke of cold and steady storm, an inward conflict between a mother's longsuffering and the limitations of our nature, for our human affections are bounded by our humanity, and the infinite has no place in finite creatures. Sorrow endured in silence had at last produced an indefinable morbid something in this woman. Doubtless mental anguish had reacted on the physical frame, and some disease, perhaps an aneurism, was undermining Julie's life. Deep-seated grief lies to all appearance very quietly in the depths where it is conceived, yet, so still and apparently dormant as it is, it ceaselessly corrodes the soul, like the terrible acid which eats away crystal.

Two tears made their way down the marquise's cheeks; she rose to her feet as if some thought more poignant than any that preceded it had cut her to the quick. She had doubtless come to a conclusion as to Moïna's future; and now, foreseeing clearly all the troubles in store for her child, the sorrows of her own unhappy life had begun to weigh once more upon her. The key of her position must be sought in her daughter's situation.

The Comte de Saint-Héreen had been away for nearly six months on a political mission. The countess, whether from sheer giddiness, or in obedience to the countless instincts of woman's coquetry, or to essay its power—with all the vanity of a frivolous fine lady, all the capricious waywardness of a child—was amusing herself, during her husband's absence, by playing with the passion of a clever but heartless man, distracted (so he said) with love, the love that combines readily with every petty social ambition of a self-conceited coxcomb. Mme. d'Aiglemont, whose long experience had given her a knowledge of life, and taught her to judge of men and to dread the world, watched the course of this flirtation, and saw that it could only end in one way, if her daughter should fall into the hands of an utterly unscrupulous intriguer. How could it be other than a terrible thought for her that her daughter listened willingly to this *roué?* Her darling stood on the brink of a precipice, she felt horribly sure of it, yet dared not hold her back. She was afraid of the countess. She knew, too, that Moïna would not listen to her wise warnings; she knew that she had no influence over that nature—iron for her, silken-soft for all others. Her mother's tenderness might have led her to sympathize with the troubles of a passion called forth by the nobler qualities of a lover, but this was no passion—it was coquetry, and the marquise despised Alfred de Vandenesse, knowing that he had entered upon this flirtation with Moïna as if it were a game of chess.

But if Alfred de Vandenesse made her shudder with disgust,

she was obliged—unhappy mother!—to conceal the strongest reason for her loathing in the deepest recesses of her heart. She was on terms of intimate friendship with the Marquis de Vandenesse, the young man's father; and this friendship, a respectable one in the eyes of the world, excused the son's constant presence in the house, he professing an old attachment, dating from childhood, for Mme. de Saint-Héreen. More than this, in vain did Mme. d'Aiglemont nerve herself to come between Moïna and Alfred de Vandenesse with a terrible word, knowing beforehand that she would not succeed; knowing that the strong reason which ought to separate them would carry no weight; that she should humiliate herself vainly in her daughter's eyes. Alfred was too corrupt; Moïna too clever to believe the revelation; the young countess would turn it off and treat it as a piece of maternal strategy. Mme. d'Aiglemont had built her prison walls with her own hands; she had immured herself only to see Moïna's happiness ruined thence before she died; she was to look on helplessly at the ruin of the young life which had been her pride and joy and comfort, a life a thousand times dearer to her than her own. What words can describe anguish so hideous beyond belief, such unfathomed depths of pain?

She waited for Moïna to rise, with the impatience and sickening dread of a doomed man, who longs to have done with life, yet turns cold at the thought of the headsman. She had braced herself for a last effort, but perhaps the prospect of the certain failure of the attempt was less dreadful to her than the fear of receiving yet again one of those thrusts that went to her very heart—before that fear her courage ebbed away. Her mother's love had come to this. To love her child, to be afraid of her, to shrink from the thought of the stab, yet to go forward. So great is a mother's affection in a loving nature that, before it can fade away into indifference, the mother herself must die or find support in some great power without her, in religion or another love. Since the

marquise rose that morning, her fatal memory had called up before her some of those things, so slight to all appearance, that make landmarks in a life. Sometimes, indeed, a whole tragedy grows out of a single gesture; the tone in which a few words were spoken rends a whole life in twain; a glance into indifferent eyes is the death-blow of the gladdest love; and, unhappily, such gestures and such words were only too familiar to Mme. d'Aiglemont—she had met so many glances that wound the soul. No, there was nothing in those memories to bid her hope. On the contrary, everything went to show that Alfred had destroyed her hold on her daughter's heart, that the thought of her was now associated with duty—not with gladness. In ways innumerable, in things that were mere trifles in themselves, the countess' detestable conduct rose up before her mother; and the marquise, it may be, looked on Moïna's undutifulness as a punishment, and found excuses for her daughter in the will of heaven, that so she still might adore the hand that smote her.

All these things passed through her memory that morning, and each recollection wounded her afresh so sorely that, with a very little additional pain, her brimming cup of bitterness must have overflowed. A cold look might kill her.

The little details of domestic life are difficult to paint; but one or two, perhaps, will suffice to give an idea of the rest.

The Marquise d'Aiglemont, for instance, had grown rather deaf, but she could never induce Moïna to raise her voice for her. Once, with the naïveté of suffering, she had begged Moïna to repeat some remark which she had failed to catch, and Moïna obeyed, but with so bad a grace that Mme. d'Aiglemont had never permitted herself to make her modest request again. Ever since that day, when Moïna was talking or retailing a piece of news, her mother was careful to come near to listen; but this infirmity of deafness appeared to put the countess out of patience, and she would grumble thoughtlessly about it. This instance is one from among very many that

must have gone to the mother's heart; and yet nearly all of them might have escaped a close observer, they consisted in faint shades of manner invisible to any but a woman's eyes. Take another example: Mme. Aiglemont happened to say one day that the Princesse de Cadignan had called upon her. "Did she come to see *you!*" Moïna exclaimed. That was all; but the countess' voice and manner expressed surprise and well-bred contempt in semitones. Any heart, still young and sensitive, might well have applauded the philanthropy of savage tribes who kill off their old people when they grow too feeble to cling to a strongly shaken bough. Mme. d'Aiglemont rose smiling, and went away to weep alone.

Well-bred people, and women especially, only betray their feelings by imperceptible touches; but those who can look back over their own experience on such bruises as this mother's heart received, know also how the heart-strings vibrate to these light touches. Overcome by her memories, Mme. d'Aiglemont recollected one of those microscopically small things, so stinging and so painful was it that never till this moment had she felt all the heartless contempt that lurked beneath smiles.

At the sound of shutters thrown back at her daughter's windows, she dried her tears, and hastened up the pathway by the railings. As she went, it struck her that the gardener had been unusually careful to rake the sand along the walk which had been neglected for some little time. As she stood under her daughter's windows, the shutters were hastily closed.

"Moïna, is it you?" she asked.

No answer.

The marquise went on into the house.

"Madame la Comtesse is in the little drawing-room," said the maid, when the marquise asked whether Mme. de Saint-Héreen had finished dressing.

Mme. d'Aiglemont hurried to the little drawing-room; her heart was too full, her brain too busy to notice matters so

slight; but there on a sofa sat the countess in her loose morning gown, her hair in disorder under the cap tossed carelessly on her head, her feet thrust into slippers. The key of her bedroom hung at her girdle. Her face, aglow with color, bore traces of almost stormy thought.

"What makes people come in!" she cried crossly. "Oh! it is you, mother?" she interrupted herself, with a preoccupied look.

"Yes, child; it is your mother."

Something in her tone turned those words into an outpouring of the heart, the cry of some deep inward feeling, only to be described by the word "holy." So thoroughly in truth had she rehabilitated the sacred character of a mother that her daughter was impressed, and turned toward her, with something of awe, uneasiness, and remorse in her manner. The room was the farthest of a suite, and safe from indiscreet intrusion, for no one could enter it without giving warning of approach through the previous apartments. The marquise closed the door.

"It is my duty, my child, to warn you in one of the most serious crises in the lives of us women; you have perhaps reached it unconsciously, and I am come to speak to you as a friend rather than as a mother. When you married, you acquired freedom of action; you are only accountable to your husband now; but I asserted my authority so little (perhaps I was wrong) that I think I have a right to expect you to listen to me, for once at least, in a critical position when you must need counsel. Bear in mind, Moïna, that you are married to a man of high ability, a man of whom you may well be proud, a man who——"

"I know what you are going to say mother!" Moïna broke in pettishly. "I am to be lectured about Alfred——"

"Moïna," the marquise said gravely, as she struggled with her tears, "you would not guess at once if you did not feel——"

"What?" asked Moïna, almost haughtily. "Why, really, mother——"

Mme. d'Aiglemont here summoned up all her strength. "Moïna," she said, "you must attend carefully to this that I ought to tell you——"

"I am attending," returned the countess, folding her arms and affecting insolent submission. "Permit me, mother, to ring for Pauline," she added, with incredible self-possession; "I will send her away first."

She rang the bell.

"My dear child, Pauline cannot possibly hear——"

"Mamma," interrupted the countess, with a gravity which must have struck her mother as something unusual, "I must——"

She stopped short, for the woman was in the room.

"Pauline, go *yourself* to Baudran's and ask why my hat has not yet been sent."

Then the countess reseated herself and scrutinized her mother. The marquise, with a swelling heart and dry eyes, in painful agitation, which none but a mother can fully understand, began to open Moïna's eyes to the risk that she was running. But either the countess felt hurt and indignant at her mother's suspicions of a son of the Marquis de Vandenesse or she was seized with a sudden fit of inexplicable levity caused by the inexperience of youth. She took advantage of a pause.

"Mamma, I really thought you were only jealous of *the father*——" she said, with a forced laugh.

Mme. d'Aiglemont shut her eyes and bent her head at the words, with a very faint, almost inaudible sigh. She looked up and out into space, as if she felt the common overmastering impulse to appeal to God at the great crises of our lives; then she looked at her daughter, and her eyes were full of awful majesty and the expression of profound sorrow.

"My child," she said, and her voice was hardly recog-

nizable, "you have been less merciful to your mother than he against whom she sinned; less merciful than perhaps God himself will be!"

Mme. d'Aiglemont rose; at the door she turned; but she saw nothing but surprise in her daughter's face. She went out. Scarcely had she reached the garden when her strength failed her. There was a violent pain at her heart, and she sank down on a bench. As her eyes wandered over the path, she saw fresh marks impressed on it, a man's footprints were distinctly recognizable. It was too late, then, beyond a doubt. Now she began to understand the reason for that order given to Pauline, and with these torturing thoughts came a revelation more hateful than any that had gone before it. She drew her own inferences—the son of the Marquis de Vandenesse had destroyed all feeling of respect for her in her daughter's mind. The physical pain grew worse; by degrees she lost consciousness, and sat like one asleep upon the garden-seat.

The Countess de Saint-Héreen, left to herself, thought that her mother had given her a somewhat shrewd home-thrust, but a kiss and a few attentions that evening would make all right again.

A shrill cry came from the garden. She leaned carelessly out, as Pauline, not yet departed on her errand, called out for help, holding the marquise in her arms.

"Do not frighten my daughter!" these were the last words the mother uttered.

Moïna saw them carry in a pale and lifeless form that struggled for breath, and arms moving restlessly as in protest or effort to speak; and overcome by the sight, Moïna followed in silence, and helped to undress her mother and lay her on her bed. The burden of her fault was greater than she could bear. In that supreme hour she learned to know her mother —too late, she could make no reparation now. She would have them leave her alone with her mother; and when there was no one else in the room, when she felt that the hand

which had always been so tender for her was now grown cold to her touch, she broke out into weeping. Her tears aroused the marquise; she could still look at her darling Moïna; and at the sound of sobbing, that seemed as if it must rend the delicate, disheveled breast, could smile back at her daughter. That smile taught the unnatural child that forgiveness is always to be found in the great deep of a mother's heart.

Servants on horseback had been dispatched at once for the physician and surgeon and for Mme. d'Aiglemont's grandchildren. Mme. d'Aiglemont the younger and her little sons arrived with the medical men, a sufficiently impressive, silent, and anxious little group, which the servants of the house came to join. The young marquise, hearing no sound, tapped gently at the door. That signal, doubtless, roused Moïna from her grief, for she flung open the door and stood before them. No words could have spoken more plainly than that disheveled figure looking out with haggard eyes upon the assembled family. Before that living picture of Remorse, the rest were dumb. It was easy to see that the marquise's feet were stretched out stark and stiff with the agony of death; and Moïna, leaning against the door-frame, looking in their faces, spoke in a hollow voice—

"I have lost my mother!"

PARIS, 1828–1844.

A START IN LIFE.

Translated by CLARA BELL.

To Laure,

To whose bright and modest wit I owe the idea of this Scene. Hers be the honor!

Her brother,

DE BALZAC.

RAILROADS, in a future now not far distant, must lead to the disappearance of certain industries and modify others, especially such as are concerned in the various modes of transport commonly used in the neighborhood of Paris. In fact, the persons and the things which form the accessories of this little drama will ere long give it the dignity of an archæological study. Will not our grandchildren be glad to know something of a time which they will speak of as the old days?

For instance, the picturesque vehicles known as *coucous*, which used to stand on the Place de la Concorde and crowd the Cours-la-Reine, which flourished so greatly during a century, and still survived in 1830, exist no more. Even on the occasion of the most attractive rural festivity, hardly one is to be seen on the road in this year 1842.

In 1820 not all the places famous for their situation, and designated as the environs of Paris, had any regular service of coaches. The Touchards, father and son, had acquired a monopoly of conveyances to and from the largest towns within a radius of fifteen leagues, and their establishment occupied splendid premises in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Denis. In spite of their old standing and their strenuous efforts, in spite of their large capital and all the advantages of strong cen-

tralization, Touchards' service had formidable rivals in the *coucous* of the Faubourg Saint-Denis for distances of seven or eight leagues out of Paris. The Parisian has indeed such a passion for the country that local establishments also held their own in many cases against the *Petites Messageries* (little stage-coaches), a name given to Touchards' short-distance coaches, to distinguish them from the *Grandes Messageries* (large stage-coaches), the general conveyance company, in the Rue Montmartre.

At that time the success of the Touchards stimulated speculation; conveyances were put on the road to and from the smallest towns—handsome, quick, and commodious vehicles, starting and returning at fixed hours; and these, in a circuit of ten leagues or so, gave rise to vehement competition. Beaten on the longer distances, the *coucou* fell back on short runs, and survived a few years longer. It finally succumbed when the omnibus had proved the possibility of packing eighteen persons into a vehicle drawn by two horses. Nowadays the *coucou*, if a bird of such heavy flight is by chance still to be found in the recesses of some store for dilapidated vehicles, would, from its structure and arrangement, be the subject of learned investigations, like Cuvier's researches on the animals discovered in the lime-quarries of Montmartre.

These smaller companies, being threatened by larger speculations competing, after 1822, with the Touchards, had nevertheless a fulcrum of support in the sympathies of the residents in the places they plied to. The master of the concern, who was both owner and driver of the vehicle, was usually a tavernkeeper of the district, to whom its inhabitants were as familiar as were their common objects and interests. He was intelligent in fulfilling commissions; he asked less for his little services, and therefore obtained more, than the employes of the Touchards. He was clever at evading the necessity for an excise pass. At a pinch he would infringe the rules as to the number of passengers he might carry. In fact, he was

master of the affections of the people. Hence, when a rival appeared in the field, if the old-established conveyance ran on alternate days of the week, there were persons who would postpone their journey to take it in the company of the original driver, even though his vehicle and horses were none of the safest and best.

One of the lines which the Touchards, father and son, tried hard to monopolize, but which was hotly disputed—nay, which is still a subject of dispute with their successors the Toulouses—was that between Paris and Beaumont-sur-Oise, a highly profitable district, since in 1822 three lines of conveyances worked it at once. The Touchards lowered their prices, but in vain, and in vain increased the number of services; in vain they put superior vehicles on the road, the competitors held their own, so profitable is a line running through little towns like Saint-Denis and Saint-Brice, and such a string of villages as Prerrefitte, Groslay, Écouen, Poncelles, Moisselles, Baillet, Monsoult, Maffliers, Franconville, Presles, Nointel, Nerville, and others. The Touchards at last extended their line of service as far as to Chambly; the rivals ran to Chambly. And at the present day the Toulouses go as far as Beauvais.

On this road, the highway to England, there is a place which is not ill-named *la Cave* (the Cellar), a paved way leading down into one of the most delightful nooks of the Oise valley, and to the little town of l'Isle-Adam, doubly famous as the native place of the now extinct family of l'Isle-Adam, and as the splendid residence of the Princes of Bourbon-Conti. L'Isle-Adam is a charming little town, flanked by two large hamlets, that of Nogent and that of Parmain, both remarkable for the immense quarries which have furnished the materials for the finest edifices of Paris, and indeed abroad too, for the base and capitals of the theatre at Brussels are of Nogent stone.

Though remarkable for its beautiful points of view and for

famous castles built by princes, abbots, or famous architects, as at Cassan, Stors, le Val, Nointel, Persan, etc., this district, in 1822, had as yet escaped competition, and was served by two coach-owners, who agreed to work it between them. This exceptional state of things was based on causes easily explained. From la Cave, where, on the highroad, begins the fine paved way, due to the magnificence of Princes of Conti, to l'Isle Adam, is a distance of two leagues; no main-line coach could diverge so far from the highway, especially as l'Isle-Adam was at that time the end of things in that direction. The road led thither, and ended there. Of late, a highroad joins the valley of Montmorency to that of l'Isle-Adam. Leaving Saint-Denis, it passes through Saint-Leu-Taverny, Méru, l'Isle-Adam, and along by the Oise as far as Beaumont. But in 1822 the only road to l'Isle-Adam was that made by the Princes de Conti.

Consequently Pierrotin and his colleague reigned supreme from Paris to l'Isle-Adam, beloved of all the district. Pierrotin's coach and his friend's ran by Stors, le Val, Parmain, Champagne, Mours, Prérolles, Nogent, Nerville, and Maffliers. Pierrotin was so well known that the residents at Monsoult, Moisselles, Baillet, and Saint-Brice, though living on the high-road, made use of his coach, in which there was more often a chance of a seat than in the Beaumont *diligence*, which was always full. Pierrotin and his friendly rival agreed to admiration. When Pierrotin started from l'Isle-Adam, the other set out from Paris, and vice-versa. Of the opposition driver, nothing need be said. Pierrotin was the favorite in the line. And of the two, he alone appears on the scene in this veracious history. So it will suffice to say that the two coach-drivers lived on excellent terms, competing in honest warfare, and contending for customers without sharp practice. In Paris, out of economy, they put up at the same inn, using the same yard, the same stable, the same coach-shed, the same office, the same booking-clerk. And this fact is enough to

show that Pierrotin and his opponent were "good dough," as the common folk say.

That inn, at the corner of the Rue d'Enghien, exists to this day, and is called the Silver Lion (Lion d'Argent). The proprietor of this hostelry—a hostelry from time immemorial for coach-drivers—himself managed a line of vehicles to Dammartin on so sound a basis that his neighbors the Touchards, of the *Petites Messageries* opposite, never thought of starting a conveyance on that road.

Though the coaches for l'Isle-Adam were supposed to set out punctually, Pierrotin and his friend displayed a degree of indulgence on this point which, while it won them the affections of the natives, brought down severe remonstrances from strangers who were accustomed to the exactitude of the larger public companies; but the two drivers of these vehicles, half *diligence*, half *coucou*, always found partisans among their regular customers. In the afternoon the start fixed for four o'clock always dragged on till half-past; and in the morning, though eight was the hour named, the coach never got off before nine.

This system was, however, very elastic. In summer, the golden season for coaches, the time of departure, rigorously punctual as concerned strangers, gave way for natives of the district. This method afforded Pierrotin the chance of pocketing the price of two places for one when a resident in the town came early to secure a place already booked by a bird of passage, who, by ill-luck, was behind time. Such elastic rules would certainly not be approved by a Puritan moralist; but Pierrotin and his colleague justified it by the hard times, by their losses during the winter season, by the necessity they would presently be under of purchasing better carriages, and, finally, by an exact application of the rules printed on their tickets, copies of which were of the greatest rarity, and never given but to those travelers who were so perverse as to insist.

Pierrotin, a man of forty, was already the father of a family. He had left the cavalry in 1815, when the army was disbanded, and then this very good fellow had succeeded his father, who drove a *coucou* between l'Isle-Adam and Paris on somewhat erratic principles. After marrying the daughter of a small tavernkeeper, he extended and regulated the business, and was noted for his intelligence and military punctuality. Brisk and decisive, Pierrotin—a nickname, no doubt—had a mobile countenance which gave an amusing expression and a semblance of intelligence to a face reddened by exposure to the weather. Nor did he lack the "gift of the gab," which is caught by intercourse with the world and by seeing different parts of it. His voice, by dint of talking to his horses and shouting to others to get out of the way, was somewhat harsh, but he could soften it to a customer.

His costume, that of coach-drivers of the superior class, consisted of stout, strong boots, heavy with nails, and made at l'Isle-Adam, trousers of bottle-green velveteen, and a jacket of the same, over which, in the exercise of his functions, he wore a blue blouse, embroidered in colors on the collar, shoulder-pieces, and wristbands. On his head was a cap with a peak. His experience of military service had stamped on Pierrotin the greatest respect for social superiority, and a habit of obedience to people of the upper ranks; but, while he was ready to be on familiar terms with the modest citizen, he was always respectful to women, of whatever class. At the same time, the habit of "carting folks about," to use his own expression, had led him to regard his travelers as parcels; though, being on feet, they demanded less care than the other merchandise, which was the aim and end of the service.

Warned by the general advance, which since the peace had begun to tell on his business, Pierrotin was determined not to be beaten by the progress of the world. Ever since the last summer season he had talked a great deal of a certain large conveyance he had ordered of Farry, Breilmann & Co.,

the best diligence builders, as being needed by the constant increase of travelers. Pierrotin's plant at that time consisted of two vehicles. One, which did duty for the winter, and the only one he ever showed to the tax-collector, was of the *coucou* species. The bulging sides of this vehicle allowed it to carry six passengers on two seats as hard as iron, though covered with yellow worsted velvet. These seats were divided by a wooden bar, which could be removed at pleasure or refixed in two grooves in the sides, at the height of a man's back. This bar, perfidiously covered by Pierrotin with yellow velvet, and called by him a back to the seat, was the cause of much despair to the travelers from the difficulty of moving and readjusting it. If the board was painful to fix, it was far more so to the shoulder-blades when it was fitted; on the other hand, if it was not unshipped, it made entrance and egress equally perilous, especially to women.

Though each seat of this vehicle, which bulged at the sides, like a woman before childbirth, was licensed to hold no more than three passengers, it was not unusual to see eight packed in it like herrings in a barrel. Pierrotin declared that they were all the more comfortable since they formed a compact and immovable mass, whereas three were constantly thrown against each other, and often ran the risk of spoiling their hats against the roof of the vehicle by reason of the violent jolting on the road. In front of the body of this carriage there was a wooden box-seat, Pierrotin's driving-seat, which could also carry three passengers, who were designated, as all the world knows, as *lapins* (rabbits). Occasionally, Pierrotin would accommodate four *lapins*, and then sat askew on a sort of box below the front seat for the *lapins* to rest their feet on; this was filled with straw or such parcels as could not be injured.

The body of the vehicle, painted yellow, was ornamented by a band of bright blue, on which might be read in white letters, on each side; L'ISLE-ADAM—PARIS; and on the back,

SERVICE DE L'ISLE-ADAM. Our descendants will be under a mistake if they imagine that this conveyance could carry no more than thirteen persons, including Pierrotin. On great occasions three more could be seated in a square compartment covered with tarpaulin in which trunks, boxes, and parcels were generally piled; but Pierrotin was too prudent to let any but regular customers sit there, and only took them up three or four hundred yards outside the barrier. These passengers in the *poulailler*, or hen-coop, the name given by the conductors to this part of a coach, were required to get out before reaching any village on the road where there was a station of gendarmerie; for the overloading, forbidden by the regulations "for the greater safety of travelers," was in these cases so excessive that the gendarme—always Pierrotin's very good friend—could not have excused himself from reporting such a flagrant breach of rules. But thus Pierrotin's vehicle, on certain Saturday evenings and Monday mornings, carted out fifteen passengers; and then to help pull it, he gave his large but aged horse, named Rougeot, the assistance of a second nag about as big as a pony, which he could never sufficiently praise. This little steed was a mare called Bichette; and she ate little, she was full of spirit, nothing could tire her, she was worth her weight in gold!

"My wife would not exchange her for that fat lazybones Rougeot!" Pierrotin would exclaim, when a traveler laughed at him about this concentrated *extract of horse*.

The difference between this carriage and the other was, that the second had four wheels. This vehicle, a remarkable structure, always spoken of as "the four-wheeled coach," could hold seventeen passengers, being intended to carry fourteen. It rattled so preposterously that the folk in l'Isle-Adam would say, "Here comes Pierrotin!" when he had but just come out of the wood that hangs on the slope to the valley. It was divided into two lobes, one of which, called the *intérieur*, the body of the coach, carried six passengers on

two seats; and the other, a sort of cab stuck on in front, was styled the *coupé*. This coupé could be closed by an inconvenient and eccentric arrangement of glass windows, which would take too long to describe in this place. The *four-wheeled coach* also had on top a sort of gig with a hood, into which Pierrotin packed six travelers; it closed with leather curtains. Pierrotin himself had an almost invisible perch below the glass windows of the coupé.

The coach to l'Isle-Adam only paid the taxes levied on public vehicles for the *coucou*, represented to carry six travelers, and whenever Pierrotin turned out the "four-wheeled coach" he took out a special license. This may seem strange indeed in these days; but at first the tax on vehicles, imposed somewhat timidly, allowed the owners of coaches to play these little tricks, which gave them the pleasure of "putting their thumbs to their noses" behind the collector's back, as they phrased it. By degrees, however, the hungry Exchequer grew strict; it allowed no vehicle to take the road without displaying the two plates which now certify that their capacity is registered and the tax paid. Everything, even a tax, has its age of innocence, and toward the end of 1822 that age was not yet over. Very often, in summer, the four-wheeled coach and the covered chaise made the journey in company, carrying in all thirty passengers, while Pierrotin paid only for six.

On these golden days the convoy started from the Faubourg Saint-Denis at half-past four, and arrived in style at l'Isle-Adam by ten o'clock at night. And then Pierrotin, proud of his run, which necessitated the hire of extra horses, would say: "We have made a good pace to-day!" To enable him to do nine leagues in five hours with this machinery, he did not stop, as the coaches usually do on this road, at Saint-Brice, Moisselles, and la Cave.

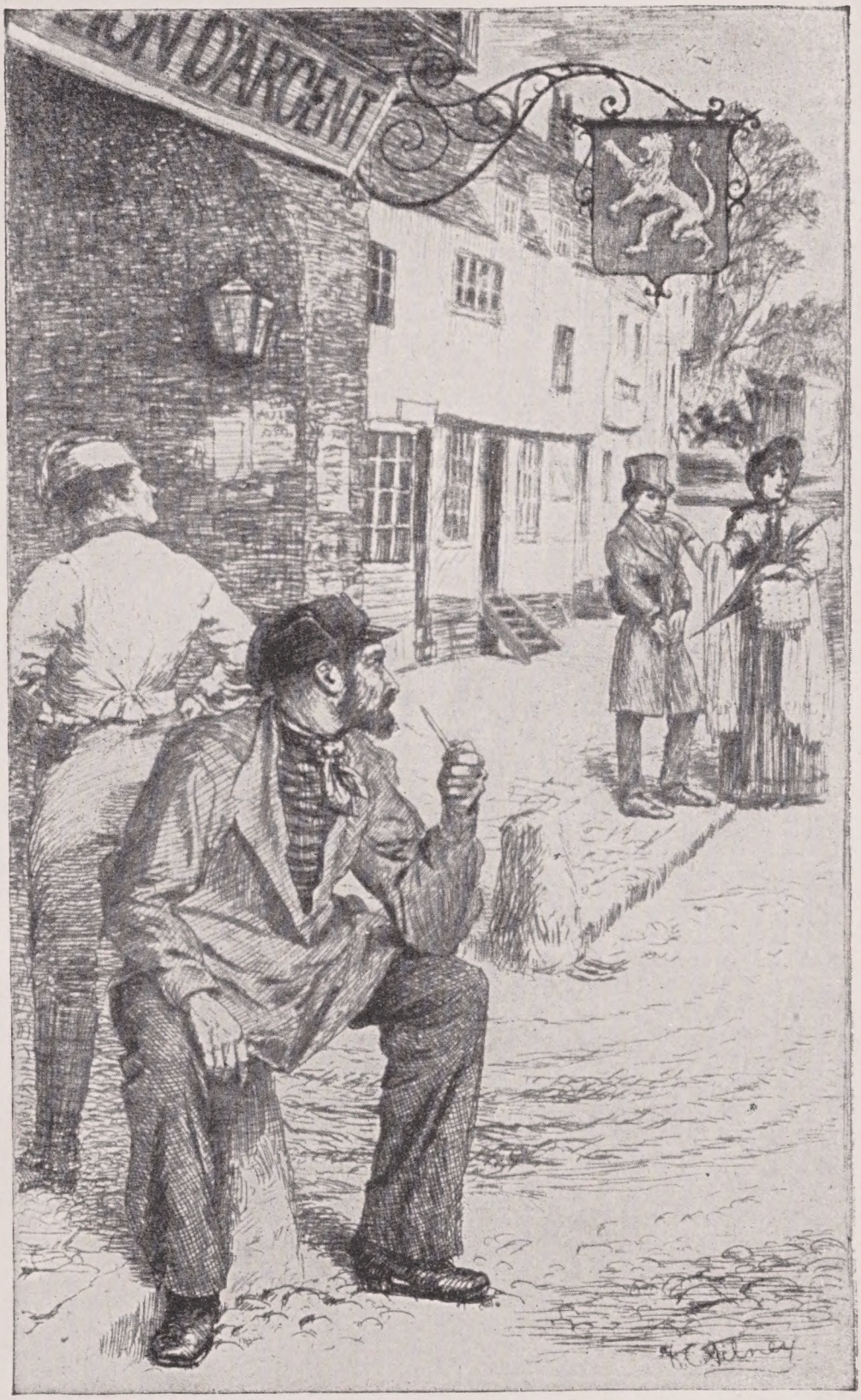
The Silver Lion occupied a plot of ground running very far back. Though the front of the Rue Saint-Denis has no more than three or four windows, there was at that time, on one

side of the long yard, with the stables at the bottom, a large house backing on the wall of the adjoining property. The entrance was through an arched way under the second floor, and there was standing-room here for two or three coaches. In 1822, the booking-office for all the lines that put up at the Silver Lion was kept by the innkeeper's wife, who had a book for each line; she took the money, wrote down the names, and good-naturedly accommodated passengers' luggage in her vast kitchen. The travelers were quite satisfied with this patriarchally free-and-easy mode of business. If they came too early, they sat down by the fire within the immense chimney-place, or lounged in the passage, or went to the Café de l'Echiquier, at the corner of the street of that name, parallel to the Rue d'Enghien, from which it is divided by a few houses only.

Quite early in the autumn of that year, one Saturday morning, Pierrotin, his hands stuffed through holes in his blouse and into his pockets, was standing at the front gate of the Silver Lion, whence he had a perspective view of the inn kitchen, and beyond it of the long yard and the stables at the end, like black caverns. The Dammartin diligence had just started, and was lumbering after Touchard's coaches. It was past eight o'clock. Under the wide archway, over which was inscribed on a long board: HOTEL DU LION D'ARGENT, the stablemen and coach-porters were watching the vehicles start at the brisk pace which deludes the traveler into the belief that the horses will continue to keep it up.

"Shall I bring out the horses, master?" said Pierrotin's stable-boy, when there was nothing more to be seen.

"A quarter-past eight, and I see no passengers," said Pierrotin. "What the deuce is become of them? Put the horses to, all the same. No parcels either. Bless us and save us! This afternoon, now, *he* won't know how to stow his passengers, as it is so fine, and I have only four booked. There's a


N D'ARGENT

PIERROTIN SAT DOWN ON ONE OF THE ENORMOUS CURBSTONES.

pretty lookout for a Saturday! That's always the way when you're wanting the ready! It's dog's work, and work for a dog!"

"And if you had any, where would you stow 'em? You have nothing but your two-wheeled cab," said the luggage-porter, trying to smooth down Pierrotin.

"And what about my new coach?"

"Then there is such a thing as your new coach?" asked the sturdy Auvergnat, grinning and showing his front teeth, as white and as broad as almonds.

"You old good-for-nothing! Why, she will take the road to-morrow, Sunday, and we want eighteen passengers to fill her!"

"Oh, ho! A fine turn-out; that'll make the folk stare!" said the Auvergnat.

"A coach like the one that runs to Beaumont, I can tell you! Brand new, painted in red and gold, enough to make the Touchards burst with envy! It will take three horses. I have found a fellow to Rougeot, and Bichette will trot unicorn like a good 'un. Come, harness up," said Pierrotin, who was looking toward the Porte Saint-Denis while cramming his short pipe with tobacco, "I see a lady out there, and a little man with bundles under his arm. They are looking for the Silver Lion, for they would have nothing to say to the *coucous* on the stand. Hey-day, I seem to know the lady for a customer."

"You often get home filled up after starting empty," said his man.

"But no parcels!" replied Pierrotin. "By the mass! What devil's luck!"

And Pierrotin sat down on one of the enormous curbstones which protected the lower part of the wheels from the friction of the walls, but he wore an anxious and thoughtful look that was not usual with him. This dialogue, apparently so trivial, had stirred up serious anxieties at the bottom of Pierrotin's

heart. And what could trouble Pierrotin's heart but the thought of a handsome coach? To cut a dash on the road to rival the Touchards, extend his service, carry passengers who might congratulate him on the increased convenience due to the improvements in coach-building, instead of hearing constant complaints of his drags, this was Pierrotin's laudable ambition.

Now the worthy man, carried away by his desire to triumph over his colleague, and to induce him some day perhaps to leave him without a competitor on the road to l'Isle-Adam, had overstrained his resources. He had ordered his coach from Farry, Breilmann & Co., the makers who had lately introduced English coach-springs in the place of the swan's-neck and other old-fashioned French springs; but these hard-hearted and mistrustful makers would only deliver the vehicle for ready cash. Not caring, indeed, to build a conveyance so unsalable if it were left on their hands, these shrewd tradesmen had not undertaken the job till Pierrotin had paid them two thousand francs on account. To satisfy their justifiable requirements, Pierrotin had exhausted his savings and his credit. He had bled his wife, his father-in-law, and his friends. He had been to look at the superb vehicle the day before in the painter's shop; it was ready, and waiting to take the road, but in order to see it there on the following day he must pay up.

Hence Pierrotin was in need of a thousand francs! Being in debt to the innkeeper for stable-room, he dared not borrow the sum of him. For lack of this thousand francs, he risked losing the two thousand already paid in advance, to say nothing of five hundred, the cost of Rougeot the second, and three hundred for new harness, for which, however, he had three months' credit. And yet, urged by the wrath of despair and the folly of vanity, he had just declared that his coach would start on the morrow, Sunday. In paying the fifteen hundred francs on account of the two thousand five hundred,

he had hoped that the coachmakers' feelings might be touched so far that they would let him have the vehicle; but, after three minutes' reflection, he exclaimed—

"No, no! they are sharks, perfect skinflints. Supposing I were to apply to Monsieur Moreau, the steward at Presles—he is such a good fellow, that he would, perhaps, take my note of hand at six months' date," thought he, struck by a new idea.

At this instant, a servant out of livery, carrying a leather trunk, on coming across from the Touchards' office, where he had failed to find a place vacant on the Chambly coach starting at one o'clock, said to the driver—

"Pierrotin? Is that you?"

"What then?" said Pierrotin.

"If you can wait less than a quarter of an hour, you can carry my master; if not, I will take his portmanteau back again, and he must make the best of a chaise off the stand."

"I will wait two—three-quarters of an hour, and five minutes more to that, my lad," said Pierrotin, with a glance at the smart little leather trunk, neatly strapped, and fastened with a brass lock engraved with a coat-of-arms.

"Very good, then, there you are," said the man, relieving his shoulder of the trunk, which Pierrotin lifted, weighed in his hand, and scrutinized.

"Here," said he to his stable-boy, "pack it round with soft hay, and put it in the boot at the back. There is no name on it," said he.

"There are monseigneur's arms," replied the servant.

"Monseigneur?—worth his weight in gold! Come and have a short drink," said Pierrotin, with a wink, as he led the way to the Café of the Echiquiers. "Two absinthes," cried he to the waiter as they went in. "But who is your master, and where is he bound? I never saw you before," said Pierrotin to the servant as they clinked glasses.

"And for very good reasons," replied the footman. "My master does not go your way once a year, and always then in

his own carriage. He prefers the road by the Orge valley, where he has the finest park near Paris, a perfect Versailles, a family estate, from which he takes his name. Don't you know Monsieur Moreau?"

"The steward at Presles?" said Pierrotin.

"Well, Monsieur le Comte is going to spend two days at Presles."

"Oh, ho, then my passenger is the Comte de Sérizy!" cried Pierrotin.

"Yes, my man, no less. But, mind, he sends strict orders. If you have any of the people belonging to your parts in your chaise, do not mention the count's name; he wants to travel *incognito*, and desired me to tell you so, and promise you a handsome tip."

"Hah! and has this hide-and-seek journey anything to do, by any chance, with the bargain that old Léger, the farmer at les Moulineaux, wants to make?"

"I don't know," replied the man; "but the fat is in the fire. Last evening I was sent to the stables to order the chaise *à la Daumont*,* by seven this morning, to drive to Presles; but at seven my master countermanded it. Augustin, his valet, ascribes this change of plan to the visit of a lady, who seemed to have come from the country."

"Can any one have had anything to say against Monsieur Moreau? The best of men, the most honest, the king of men, I say! He might have made a deal more money than he has done if he had chosen, take my word for it——"

"Then he was very foolish," said the servant sententiously.

"Then Monsieur de Sérizy is going to live at Presles at last? The castle has been refurnished and done up," said Pierrotin after a pause. "Is it true that two hundred thousand francs have been spent on it already?"

"If you or I had the money that has been spent there, we could set up in the world. If Madame la Comtesse goes

* A carriage known by this name.

down there, the Moreaus' fun will be over," added the man, with mysterious significance.

"A good man is Monsieur Moreau," repeated Pierrotin, who was still thinking of borrowing the thousand francs from the steward; "a man that makes his men work, and does not spare them; who gets all the profit out of the land, and for his master's benefit too. A good man! He often comes to Paris, and always by my coach; he gives me something handsome for myself, and always has a lot of parcels to and fro. Three or four a day, sometimes for monsieur and sometimes for madame; a bill of fifty francs a month, say, only on the carrier's score. Though madame holds her head a little above her place, she is fond of her children; I take them to school for her and bring them home again. And she always gives me five francs, and your biggest pot would not do more. And whenever I have any one from them or to them, I always drive right up to the gates of the house—I could not do less, now, could I?"

"They say that Monsieur Moreau had no more than a thousand crowns in the world when Monsieur le Comte put him in as land steward at Presles," said the loquacious man-servant.

"But in seventeen years' time—since 1806—the man must have made something," replied Pierrotin.

"To be sure," said the servant, shaking his head. "And masters are queer too. I hope, for Moreau's sake, that he has feathered his nest."

"I often deliver hampers at your house in the Chaussée-d'Antin," said Pierrotin, "but I have never had the privilege of seeing either the master or his lady."

"Monsieur le Comte is a very good sort," said the man confidentially; "but if he wants you to hold your tongue about his *cognito*, there is a screw loose you may depend. At least, that is what we think at home. For why else should he counterorder the traveling carriage? Why ride in a public

chaise? A peer of France might take a hired chaise, you would think."

"A hired chaise might cost him as much as forty francs for the double journey; for, I can tell, if you don't know our road, it is fit for squirrels to climb. Everlastingly up and down!" said Pierrotin. "Peer of France or tradesman, everybody looks at both sides of a five-franc piece. If this trip means mischief to Monsieur Moreau—dear, dear, I should be vexed indeed if any harm came to him. By the mass! Can no way be found of warning him? For he is a real good 'un, an honest sort, the king of men, I say——"

"Pooh! Monsieur le Comte is much attached to Monsieur Moreau," said the other. "But if you will take a bit of good advice from me, mind your own business, and let him mind his. We all have quite enough to do to take care of ourselves. You just do what you are asked to do; all the more because it does not pay to play fast and loose with monseigneur. Add to that, the count is generous. If you oblige him that much," said the man, measuring off the nail of one finger, "he will reward you that much," and he stretched out his arm.

This judicious hint, and yet more the illustrative figure, coming from a man so high in office as the Comte de Sérizy's second footman, had the effect of cooling Pierrotin's zeal for the steward of Presles.

"Well, good-day, Monsieur Pierrotin," said the man.

A short sketch of the previous history of the Comte de Sérizy and his steward is here necessary to explain the little drama about to be played in Pierrotin's coach.

Monsieur Hugret de Sérizy is descended in a direct line from the famous Président Hugret, ennobled by Francis the First. They bear as arms *party per pale or and sable, an orle and two lozenges counterchanged.* Motto, *i semper melius eris*, which, like the two distaffs assumed as supporters,

shows the modest pretense of the citizen class at a time when each rank of society had its own place in the State, and also the artlessness of the age in the punning motto, where *eris* with the *I* at the beginning, and the final *S* of *melius*, represent the name, Sérisi, of the estate, whence the title.

The present count's father was a president of Parliament before the Revolution. He himself, a member of the High Council of State in 1787, at the early age of two-and-twenty, was favorably known for certain reports on some delicate matters. He did not emigrate during the Revolution, but remained on his lands of Sérizy, near Arpajon, where the respect felt for his father protected him from molestation.

After spending a few years in nursing the old president, whom he lost in 1794, he was elected to the Council of Five Hundred, and took up his legislative functions as a distraction from his grief.

After the eighteenth Brumaire, Monsieur de Sérizy became the object—as did all the families connected with the old Parliament—of the First Consul's attentions, and by him he was appointed a councilor of State to reorganize one of the most disorganized branches of the administration. Thus this scion of a great historical family became one of the most important wheels in the vast and admirable machinery due to Napoleon. The State councilor ere long left his department to be made a minister. The Emperor created him count and senator, and he was proconsul to two different kingdoms in succession.

In 1806, at the age of forty, he married the sister of the one-time Marquis de Ronquerolles, and widow, at the age of twenty, of Gaubert, one of the most distinguished of the Republican generals, who left her all his wealth. This match, suitable in point of rank, doubled the Comte de Sérizy's already considerable fortune; he was now the brother-in-law of the *ci-devant* Marquis de Rouvre, whom Napoleon created count and appointed to be his chamberlain.

In 1814, worn out with incessant work, Monsieur de Sérizy whose broken health needed rest, gave up all his appointments, left the district of which Napoleon had made him governor, and came to Paris, where the Emperor was compelled by ocular evidence to concede his claims. This indefatigable master, who could not believe in fatigue in other people, had at first supposed the necessity that prompted the Comte de Sérizy to be simple defection. Though the senator was not in disgrace, it was said that he had cause for complaint of Napoleon. Consequently, when the Bourbons came back, Louis XVIII., whom Monsieur de Sérizy acknowledged as his legitimate sovereign, granted to the senator, now a peer of France, the highly confidential post of steward of his privy purse, and made him a minister of State.

On the 20th March, Monsieur de Sérizy did not follow the King to Ghent; he made it known to Napoleon that he remained faithful to the House of Bourbon, and accepted no peerage during the Hundred Days, but spent that brief reign on his estate of Sérizy. After the Emperor's second fall, the count naturally resumed his seat in the Privy Council, was one of the Council of State, and liquidator on behalf of France in the settlement of the indemnities demanded by foreign powers.

He had no love of personal magnificence, no ambition even, but exerted great influence in public affairs. No important political step was ever taken without his being consulted, but he never went to court, and was seldom seen in his own drawing-room. His noble life, devoted to work from the first, ended by being perpetual work and nothing else. The count rose at four in the morning in all seasons, worked till midday, then took up his duties as a peer, or as vice-president of the Council, and went to bed at nine.

Monsieur de Sérizy had long worn the grand cross of the Legion of Honor; he also had the orders of the Golden Fleece, of Saint Andrew of Russia, of the Prussian Eagle; in

short, almost every order of the European Courts. No one was less conspicuous or more valuable than he in the world of politics. As may be supposed, to a man of his temper the flourish of court favor and worldly success were a matter of indifference.

But no man, unless he is a priest, can live such a life without some strong motive; and his mysterious conduct had its key—a cruel one. The count had loved his wife before he married her, and in him this passion had withstood all the domestic discomforts of matrimony with a widow who remained mistress of herself, after as well as before her second marriage, and who took all the more advantage of her liberty because Monsieur de Sérizy indulged her as a mother indulges a spoilt child. Incessant work served him as a shield against his heart-felt woes, buried with the care that a man engaged in politics takes to hide such secrets. And he fully understood how ridiculous jealousy would be in the eyes of the world, which would certainly never have admitted the possibility of conjugal passion in a time-worn official.

How was it that his wife had thus bewitched him from the first days of marriage? Why had he suffered in those early days without taking his revenge? Why did he no longer dare to be revenged? And why, deluded by hope, had he allowed time to slip away? By what means had his young, pretty, clever wife reduced him to subjection? The answer to these questions would require a long story, out of place in this "Scene," and women, if not men, may be able to guess it. At the same time, it may be observed that the count's incessant work and many sorrows had unfortunately done much to deprive him of the advantages indispensable to a man who has to compete with unfavorable comparisons. The saddest, perhaps, of all the count's secrets was the fact that his wife's repulsion was partly justified by ailments which he owed entirely to overwork. Kind, nay, more than kind, to his wife, he made her mistress of herself and house; she received all Paris, she went

into the country, or she came back again, precisely as though she were still a widow; he took care of her money, and supplied her luxuries as if he had been her agent.

The countess held her husband in the highest esteem; indeed, she liked his turn of wit. Her approbation could give him pleasure, and thus she could do what she liked with the poor man by sitting and chatting with him for an hour. Like the great nobles of former days, the count so effectually protected his wife that he would have regarded any slur cast on her reputation as an unpardonable insult to himself. The world greatly admired his character, and Madame de Sérizy owed much to her husband. Any other woman, even though she belonged to so distinguishd a family as that of Ronquerolles, might have found herself disgraced for ever. The countess was very ungrateful—but charming in her ingratitude. Yet from time to time she would pour a balm on the count's heart-wounds.

We must now explain the cause of the minister's hurried journey and wish to remain unknown.

A rich farmer of Beaumont-sur-Oise, named Léger, held a farm of which the various portions were all fractions of the estate owned by the count, thus impairing the splendid property of Presles. The farm-lands belonged to a townsman of Beaumont-sur-Oise, one Margueron. The lease he had granted to Léger in 1799, at a time when the advance since made in agriculture could not be foreseen, was nearly run out, and the owner had refused Léger's terms for renewing it. Long since, Monsieur de Sérizy, wanting to be quit of the worry and squabbling that come of such inclosed plots, had hoped to be able to buy the farm, having heard that Monsieur Margueron's sole ambition was to see his only son, a modest official, promoted to be collector of the revenue at Senlis.

Moreau had hinted to his master that he had a dangerous rival in the person of old Léger. The farmer, knowing that he could run up the land to a high price by selling it piece-

meal to the count, was capable of paying a sum so high as to outbid the profit derivable from the collectorship to be bestowed on the younger Margueron. Two days since, the count, who wanted to have done with the matter, had sent for his notary, Alexandre Crottat, and Derville his solicitor, to inquire into the state of the affair. Though Crottat and Derville cast doubts on the steward's zeal—and, indeed, it was a puzzling letter from him that gave rise to this consultation—the count defended Moreau, who had, he said, served him faithfully for seventeen years.

"Well," Derville replied, "I can only advise your lordship to go in person to Presles and ask this Margueron to dinner. Crottat will send down his head-clerk with a form of sale ready drawn out, leaving blank pages or lines for the insertion of descriptions of the plots and the necessary titles. Your excellency will do well to go provided with a cheque for part of the purchase-money in case of need, and not to forget the letter appointing the son to the collectorship at Senlis. If you do not strike on the nail, the farm will slip through your fingers. You have no idea, Monsieur le Comte, of peasant cunning. Given a peasant on one side and a diplomatist on the other, the peasant will win the day."

Crottat confirmed this advice, which, from the footman's report to Pierrotin, the count had evidently adopted. On the day before, the count had sent a note to Moreau by the Beaumont diligence, desiring him to invite Margueron to dinner, as he meant to come to some conclusion concerning the Moulineaux farm-lands.

Before all this, the count had given orders for the restoration of the living-rooms at Presles, and Monsieur Grindot, a fashionable architect, went down there once a week. So, while treating for his acquisition, Monsieur de Sérizy proposed inspecting the works at the same time and the effect of the new decorations. He intended to give his wife a surprise by taking her to Presles, and the restoration of the castle was

a matter of pride to him. What event, then, could have happened that the count, who, only the day before, was intending to go overtly to Presles, should now wish to travel thither *incognito*, in Pierrotin's chaise?

Here a few words are necessary as to the antecedent history of the steward at Presles.

This man, Moreau, was the son of a proctor in a provincial town, who at the time of the Revolution had been made a magistrate (*procureur-syndic*) at Versailles. In this position the elder Moreau had been largely instrumental in saving the property and life of the Sérizys, father and son. Citizen Moreau had belonged to the party of Danton; Robespierre, implacable in revenge, hunted him down, caught him, and had him executed at Versailles. The younger Moreau, inheriting his father's doctrines and attachments, got mixed up in one of the conspiracies plotted against the First Consul on his accession to power. Then Monsieur de Sérizy, anxious to pay a debt of gratitude, succeeded in effecting Moreau's escape after he was condemned to death; in 1804 he asked and obtained his pardon; he at first found him a place in his office, and afterward made him his secretary and manager of his private affairs.

Some time after his patron's marriage, Moreau fell in love with the countess' maid and married her. To avoid the unpleasantly false position in which he was placed by this union —and there were many such at the Imperial Court—he asked to be appointed land steward at Presles, where his wife could play the lady, and where, in a neighborhood of small folk, they would neither of them be hurt in their own conceits. The count needed a faithful agent at Presles, because his wife preferred to reside at Sérizy, which is no more than five leagues from Paris. Moreau was familiar with all his affairs, and he was intelligent; before the Revolution he had studied law under his father. So Monsieur de Sérizy said to him—

"You will not make a fortune, for you have tied a millstone

around your neck; but you will be well off, for I will provide for that."

And, in fact, the count gave Moreau a fixed salary of a thousand crowns, and a pretty little lodge to live in beyond the outbuildings; he also allowed him so many cords of wood a year out of the plantations for fuel, so much straw, oats, and hay for two horses, and a certain proportion of the payments in kind. A sub-prefect is less well off.

During the first eight years of his stewardship, Moreau managed the estate conscientiously, and took an interest in his work. The count, when he came down to inspect the domain, to decide on purchases or sanction improvements, was struck by Moreau's faithful service, and showed his approbation by handsome presents. But when Moreau found himself the father of a girl—his third child—he was so completely established at his ease at Presles that he forgot how greatly he was indebted to Monsieur de Sérizy for such unusually liberal advantages. Thus in 1816, the steward, who had hitherto done no more than help himself freely, accepted from a wood-merchant a bonus of twenty-five thousand francs, with the promise of a rise, for signing an agreement for twelve years allowing the contractor to cut fire-logs in the woods of Presles. Moreau argued thus: He had no promise of a pension; he was the father of a family; the count certainly owed him so much by way of premium on nearly ten years' service. He was already lawfully possessed of sixty thousand francs in savings; with this sum added to it he could purchase for a hundred and twenty thousand a farm in the vicinity of Champagne, a hamlet on the right bank of the Oise a little way above l'Isle-Adam.

The stir of politics hindered the count and the country-folk from taking cognizance of this investment; the business was indeed transacted in the name of Madame Moreau, who was supposed to have come into some money from an old great-aunt in her own part of the country, at Saint-Lô.

When once the steward had tasted the delicious fruits of ownership, though his conduct was still apparently honesty itself, he never missed an opportunity of adding to his clandestine wealth; the interests of his three children served as an emollient to quench the ardors of his honesty, and we must do him the justice to say that while he was open to a bribe, took care of himself in concluding a bargain, and strained his rights to the last point, he was still honest in the eye of the law; no proof could have been brought in support of any accusation. According to the jurisprudence of the least dishonest of Paris cooks, he shared with his master the profits due to his sharp practice. This way of making a fortune was a matter of conscience—nothing more. Energetic, and fully alive to the count's interests, Moreau looked out all the more keenly for good opportunities of driving a bargain, since he was sure of a handsome douceur. Presles was worth sixty-two thousand francs in cash rents; and throughout the district, for ten leagues round, the saying was, "Monsieur de Sérizy has a second self in Moreau!"

Moreau, like a prudent man, had, since 1817, invested his salary and his profits year by year in the Funds, feathering his nest in absolute secrecy. He had refused various business speculations on the plea of want of money, and affected poverty so well to the count that he had obtained two scholarships for his boys at the Collége Henri IV. And, at this moment, Moreau owned a hundred and twenty thousand francs in reduced consols, then paying five per cent., and quoted at eighty. These unacknowledged hundred and twenty thousand francs, and his farm at Champagne, to which he had made additions, amounted to a fortune of about two hundred and eighty thousand francs, yielding an income of sixteen thousand francs a year.

This, then, was the steward's position at the time when the count wished to purchase the farm of les Moulineaux, of which the possession had become indispensable to his comfort. This

farm comprehended ninety-six plots of land, adjoining, bordering, and marching with the estate of Presles, in many cases indeed completely surrounded by the count's property, like a square in the middle of a chess-board, to say nothing of the dividing hedges and ditches, which gave rise to constant disputes when a tree was to be cut down if it stood on debatable ground. Any other Minister of State would have fought twenty lawsuits a year over the lands of les Moulineaux.

Old Léger wanted to buy them only to sell to the count; and to make the thirty or forty thousand francs of profit he hoped for, he had long been endeavoring to come to terms with Moreau. Only three days before this critical Saturday, Farmer Léger, driven by press of circumstances, had, standing out in the fields, clearly demonstrated to the steward how he could invest the Comte de Sérizy's money at two and a half per cent. in purchasing other plots; that is to say, could, as usual, seem to be serving the count's interests while pocketing the bonus of forty thousand francs offered him on the transaction.

"And on my honor," said the steward to his wife as they went to bed that evening, "if I can make fifty thousand francs on the purchase of les Moulineaux—for the count will give me ten thousand at least—we will retire to l'Isle-Adam, to the Pavillon de Nogent."

This pavilion is a charming little house built for a mistress by the Prince de Conti in a style of prodigal elegance and with every convenience.

"I should like that," said his wife. "The Dutchman who has been living there has done it up very handsomely, and he will let us have it for thirty thousand francs, since he is obliged to go back to the Indies."

"It is but a stone's throw from Champagne," Moreau went on. "I have hopes of being able to buy the farm and mill at Mours for a hundred thousand francs. We should thus have ten thousand francs a year out of land, one of the pret-

tiest places in all the valley, close to our farm lands, and six thousand francs a year still in the Funds."

"And why should you not apply to be appointed justice of the peace at l'Isle-Adam? It would give us importance and fifteen hundred francs a year more."

"Yes, I have thought of that."

In this frame of mind, on learning that his patron was coming to Presles, and wished him to invite Margueron to dinner on Saturday, Moreau at once sent off a messenger, who delivered a note to the count's valet too late in the evening for it to be delivered to Monsieur de Sérizy; but Augustin laid it, as was usual, on his master's desk. In this letter Moreau begged the count not to take so much trouble; to leave the matter to his management. By his account Margueron no longer wished to sell the lands in one lot, but talked of dividing the farm into ninety-six plots. This, at any rate, he must be persuaded to give up; and perhaps, said the steward, it might be necessary to find some one to lend his name as a screen.

Now, everybody has enemies. The steward of Presles and his wife had given offense to a retired officer named de Reybert and his wife. From stinging words and pin-pricks they had come to daggers drawn. Monsieur de Reybert breathed nothing but vengeance; he aimed at getting Moreau deposed from his place and filling it himself. These two ideas were twins. Hence the agent's conduct, narrowly watched for two years past, had no secrets from the Reyberts. At the very time when Moreau was dispatching his letter to Monsieur de Sérizy, Reybert had sent his wife to Paris. Madame de Reybert so strongly insisted on seeing the count, that, being refused at nine in the evening, when he was going to bed, she was shown into his study by seven o'clock next morning.

"Monseigneur," said she to the Minister, "my husband and I are incapable of writing an anonymous letter. I am Madame de Reybert, *née* de Corroy. My husband has a pen-

sion of no more than six hundred francs a year, and we live at Presles, where your land steward exposes us to insult upon insult though we are gentlefolk. Monsieur de Reybert, who has no love of intrigue—far from it!—retired as a Captain of Artillery in 1816 after twenty years' service, but he never came under the Emperor's eye, Monsieur le Comte; and you must know how slowly promotion came to those who did not serve under the Master himself; and, beside, my husband's honesty and plain speaking did not please his superiors.

"For three years my husband has been watching your steward for the purpose of depriving him of his place. We are outspoken, you see. Moreau has made us his enemies, and we have kept our eyes open. I have come therefore to tell you that you are being tricked in this business of the Moulineaux farm lands. You are to be cheated of a hundred thousand francs, which will be shared between the notary, Léger, and Moreau. You have given orders that Margueron is to be asked to dinner, and you intend to go to Presles to-morrow; but Margueron will be ill, and Léger is so confident of getting the farm that he is in Paris realizing enough capital. As we have enlightened you, if you want an honest agent, engage my husband. Though of noble birth, he will serve you as he served his country. Your steward has made and saved two hundred and fifty thousand francs, so he is not to be pitied."

The count thanked Madame de Reybert very coldly and answered her with curt speeches, for he greatly detested an informer; still, as he remembered Derville's suspicions, he was shaken in his mind, and then his eye fell on Moreau's letter; he read it, and in those assurances of devotion, and the respectful remonstrances as to the want of confidence implied by his intention of conducting this business himself, he saw the truth about Moreau.

"Corruption has come with wealth, as usual," said he to himself.

He had questioned Madame de Reybert less to ascertain the details than to give himself time to study her, and he had then written a line to his notary to desire him not to send his clerk to Presles, but to go there himself and meet him at dinner.

"If you should have formed a bad opinion of me, Monsieur le Comte, for the step I have taken unknown to my husband," said Madame Reybert in conclusion, "you must at least be convinced that we have obtained our knowledge as concerning your steward by perfectly natural means; the most sensitive conscience can find nothing to blame us for."

Madame de Reybert *née* de Corroy held herself as straight as a pikestaff.

The count's rapid survey took in a face pitted by the smallpox till it looked like a colander, a lean, flat figure, a pair of eager, light-colored eyes, fair curls flattened on an anxious brow, a faded green silk bonnet lined with pink, a white stuff dress with lilac spots, and kid shoes. Monsieur de Sérizy discerned in her the wife of the poor gentleman; some Puritanical soul subscribing to the French "Courrier," glowing with virtue, but very well aware of the advantages of a fixed place, and coveting it.

"A pension of six hundred francs, you said?" replied the count, answering himself rather than Madame de Reybert's communication.

"Yes, Monsieur le Comte."

"You were a de Corroy?"

"Yes, monsieur, of a noble family of the Messin country, my husband's country."

"And in what regiment was Monsieur de Reybert?"

"In the 7th Artillery."

"Good!" said the count, writing down the number.

He thought he might very well place the management of the estate in the hands of a retired officer, concerning whom he could get the fullest information at the War Office.

"Madame," he went on, ringing for his valet, "return to Presles with my notary, who is to arrange to dine there to-night, and to whom I have written a line of introduction; this is his address. I am going to Presles myself, but secretly, and will let Monsieur de Reybert know when to call on me."

So it was not a false alarm that had startled Pierrotin with the news of Monsieur de Sérizy's journey in a public chaise, and the warning to keep his name a secret; he foresaw imminent danger about to fall on one of his best customers.

On coming out of the café, Pierrotin perceived, at the gate of the Silver Lion, the woman and youth whom his acumen had recognized as travelers; for the lady, with outstretched neck and an anxious face, was evidently looking for him. This lady, in a re-dyed black silk, a gray bonnet, and an old French cashmere shawl, shod in open-work silk stockings and kid shoes, held a flat straw basket and a bright blue umbrella. She had once been handsome, and now looked about forty; and her blue eyes, bereft of the sparkle that happiness might have given them, showed that she had long since renounced the world. Her dress no less than her person betrayed a mother entirely given up to her housekeeping and her son. If the bonnet-strings were shabby, the shape of it dated from three years back. Her shawl was fastened with a large broken needle, converted into a pin by means of a head of sealing-wax.

This person was impatiently awaiting Pierrotin to commend her son to his care; the lad was probably traveling alone for the first time, and she had accompanied him as far as the coach-office, as much out of mistrust as out of motherly devotion. The son was in a way supplementary to his mother; and without the mother the son would have seemed less comprehensible. While the mother was content to display darned gloves, the son wore an olive-green overcoat, with sleeves rather short at the wrists, showing that he was still growing, as lads

do between eighteen and nineteen. And his blue trousers, mended by the mother, showed that they had been new-seated whenever the tails of his coat parted maliciously behind.

"Do not twist your gloves up in that way," she was saying when Pierrotin appeared, "you wear them shabby. Are you the driver? Ah! it is you, Pierrotin!" she went on, leaving her son for a moment and taking the coachman aside.

"All well, Madame Clapart?" said Pierrotin, with an expression on his face of mingled respect and familiarity.

"Yes, Pierrotin. Take good care of my Oscar; he is traveling alone for the first time."

"Oh! if he is going alone to Monsieur Moreau's——?" said Pierrotin, to discover whether it were really there that the young fellow was being sent.

"Yes," said the mother.

"Has Madame Moreau a liking for him, then?" said the man, with a knowing look.

"Oh! it will not be all roses for the poor boy; but his future prospects make it absolutely necessary that he should go."

Pierrotin was struck by this remark, and he did not like to confide his doubts concerning the steward to Madame Clapart; while she, on her part, dared not offend her son by giving Pierrotin such instructions as would put the coachman in the position of a mentor.

During this brief hesitation on both sides, under cover of a few remarks on the weather, the roads, the stopping-places on the way, it will not be superfluous to explain the circumstances which had thrown Pierrotin and Madame Clapart together and given rise to their few words of confidential talk. Frequently—that is to say, three or four times a month—Pierrotin, on his way to Paris, found the steward waiting at la Cave, and as the coach came up he beckoned to a gardener, who then helped Pierrotin to place on the coach one or two baskets full of such fruit and vegetables as were in season, with fowls,

eggs, butter, or game. Moreau always paid the carriage himself, and gave him money enough to pay the excise duties at the barrier, if the baskets contained anything subject to the *octroi.** These hampers and baskets never bore any label. The first time, and once for all, the steward had given the shrewd driver Madame Clapart's address by word of mouth, desiring him never to trust anybody else with these precious parcels. Pierrotin, dreaming of an intrigue between some pretty girl and the agent, had gone as directed to No. 7 Rue de la Cerisaie, near the Arsenal, where he had seen the Madame Clapart above described, instead of the fair young creature he had expected to find.

Carriers, in the course of their day's work, are initiated into many homes and trusted with many secrets; but the chances of the social system—a sort of deputy providence—having ordained that they should have no education or be unendowed with the gift of observation, it follows that they are not dangerous. Nevertheless, after many months Pierrotin could not account to himself for the friendship between Madame Clapart and Monsieur Moreau, from what little he saw of the household in the Rue de la Cerisaie. Though rents were not at that time high in the neighborhood of the Arsenal, Madame Clapart lived on the fourth floor on the inner side of a courtyard, in a house which had been in its day the residence of some magnate, at a period when the highest nobility in the kingdom lived on what had been the site of the Palais des Tournelles and the Hôtel Saint-Paul. Toward the close of the sixteenth century the great families spread themselves over vast plots previously occupied by the King's Palace Gardens, of which the record survives in the names of the streets, Rue de la Cerisaie, Rue Beautreillis, Rue des Lions, and so on. This apartment, of which every room was paneled with old wainscot, consisted of three rooms in a row—a dining-room, a drawing-room, and a bed-

* Collectors of duties payable on goods brought into the cities.

room. Above were the kitchen and Oscar's room. Fronting the door that opened on to the landing was the door of another room at an angle to these, in a sort of square tower of massive stone built out all the way up, and containing beside a wooden staircase. This tower room was where Moreau slept whenever he spent a night in Paris.

Pierrotin deposited the baskets in the first room, where he could see six straw-bottomed, walnut-wood chairs, a table, and a sideboard; narrow russet-brown curtains screened the windows. Afterward, when he was admitted to the drawing-room, he found it fitted with old furniture of the time of the Empire, much worn; and there was no more of it at all than the landlord would insist upon as a guarantee for the rent. The carved panels, painted coarsely in distemper of a dull pinkish white, and in such a way as to fill up the mouldings and thicken the scrolls and figures, far from being ornamental, were positively depressing. The floor, which was never waxed, was as dingy as the boards of a schoolroom. If the carrier by chance disturbed Monsieur and Madame Clapart at a meal, the plates, the glasses, the most trifling things revealed miserable poverty; they had plate, it is true, but the dishes and tureen, chipped and riveted like those of the very poor, were truly pitiable. Monsieur Clapart, in a dirty short coat, with squalid slippers on his feet, and always green spectacles to protect his eyes, as he took off a shabby peaked cap, five years old at least, showed a high-pointed skull, with a few dirty locks hanging about it, which a poet would have declined to call hair. This colorless creature looked a coward, and was probably a tyrant.

In this dismal apartment, facing north, with no outlook but on a vine nailed out on the opposite wall, and a well in the corner of the yard, Madame Clapart gave herself the airs of a queen, and trod like a woman who could not go out on foot. Often, as she thanked Pierrotin, she would give him a look that might have touched the heart of a looker-on; now and

again she would slip a twelve-sou piece into his hand. Her voice in speech was very sweet. Oscar was unknown to Pierrotin, for the boy had but just left school, and he had never seen him at home.

This was the sad story which Pierrotin never could have guessed, not even after questioning the gatekeeper's wife, as he sometimes did—for the woman knew nothing beyond the fact that the Claparts' rent was but two hundred and fifty francs; that they only had a woman in to help for a few hours in the morning; that madame would sometimes do her own little bit of washing, and paid for every letter as it came as if she were afraid to let the account stand.

There is no such thing—or, rather, there is very rarely such a thing—as a criminal who is bad all through. How much more rare it must be to find a man who is dishonest all through! He may make up his accounts to his own advantage rather than his master's, or pull as much hay as possible to his end of the manger; but, even while making a little fortune by illicit means, few men deny themselves the luxury of some good action. If only out of curiosity, as a contrast, or perhaps by chance, every man has known his hour of generosity; he may speak of it as a mistake, and never repeat it; still, once or twice in his life, he will have sacrificed to well-doing, as the veriest lout will sacrifice to the Graces. If Moreau's sins can be forgiven him, will it not be for the sake of his constancy in helping a poor woman of whose favors he had once been proud, and under whose roof he had found refuge when in danger of his life?

This woman, famous at the time of the Directoire for her connection with one of the five kings of the day, married, under his powerful patronage, a contractor who made millions, and then was ruined by Napoleon in 1802. This man, named Husson, was driven mad by his sudden fall from opulence to poverty; he threw himself into the Seine, leaving his handsome wife expecting a child. Moreau, who was on very inti-

mate terms with Madame Husson, was at the time under sentence of death, so he could not marry the widow, and was in fact obliged to leave France for a time. Madame Husson, only two-and-twenty, in her utter poverty, married an official named Clapart, a young man of twenty-seven—a man of promise, it was said. Heaven preserve women from handsome men of promise! In those days officials rose rapidly from humble beginnings, for the Emperor had an eye for capable men. But Clapart, vulgarly handsome, indeed, had no brains. Believing Madame Husson to be very rich, he had affected a great passion; he was simply a burden to her, never able, either then or later, to satisfy the habits she had acquired in her days of opulence. Clapart filled—badly enough—a small place in the Exchequer Office at a salary of not more than eighteen hundred francs a year.

When Moreau came back to be with the Comte de Sérizy and heard of Madame Husson's desperate plight, he succeeded, before his own marriage, in getting her a place as woman of the bedchamber in attendance on MADAME, the Emperor's mother. But in spite of such powerful patronage, Clapart could never get on; his incapacity was too immediately obvious.

In 1815 the brilliant Aspasia of the Directory, ruined by the Emperor's overthrow, was left with nothing to live on but the salary of twelve hundred francs attached to a clerkship in the municipal offices, which the Comte de Sérizy's influence secured for Clapart. Moreau, now the only friend of a woman whom he had known as the possessor of millions, obtained for Oscar Husson a half-scholarship held by the Municipality of Paris in the Collége Henri IV., and he sent to the Rue de la Cerisaie, by Pierrotin, all he could decently offer to the impoverished lady.

Oscar was his mother's one hope, her very life. The only fault to be found with the poor woman was her excessive fondness for this boy—his stepfather's utter aversion. Oscar was,

unluckily, gifted with a depth of silliness which his mother could never suspect, in spite of Clapart's ironical remarks. This silliness—or, to be accurate, this bumptiousness—disturbed Monsieur Moreau so greatly that he had begged Madame Clapart to send the lad to him for a month that he might judge for himself what line of life he would prove fit for. The steward had some thought of introducing Oscar one day to the count as his successor.

But, to give God and the devil their due, it may here be observed as an excuse for Oscar's preposterous conceit that he had been born under the roof of the Emperor's mother; in his earliest years his eyes had been dazzled by Imperial splendor. His impressible imagination had no doubt retained the memory of those magnificent spectacles, and an image of that golden time of festivities, with a dream of seeing them again. The boastfulness common to schoolboys, all possessed by desire to shine at the expense of their fellows, had in him been exaggerated by these memories of his childhood; and at home perhaps his mother was rather too apt to recall with complacency the days when she had been a queen of Paris under the Directory. Oscar, who had just finished his studies, had, no doubt, often been obliged to assert himself as superior to the humiliations which the pupils who pay are always ready to inflict on the "charity-boys" when the scholars are not physically strong enough to impress them with their superiority.

This mixture of departed splendor and faded beauty, of affection resigned to poverty, of hope founded on this son, and maternal blindness, with the heroic endurance of suffering, made this mother one of the pathetic figures which in Paris deserve the notice of the observer.

Pierrotin, who, of course, could not know how truly Moreau was attached to this woman, and she, on her part, to the man who had protected her in 1797, and was now her only friend,

would not mention to her the suspicion that had dawned in his brain as to the danger which threatened Moreau. The manservant's ominous speech: "We have all enough to do to take care of ourselves," recurred to his mind with the instinct of obedience to those whom he designated as "first in the ranks." Also, at this moment Pierrotin felt as many darts stinging his brain as there are five-francs pieces in a thousand francs. A journey of seven leagues seemed, no doubt, quite an undertaking to this poor mother, who in all her fine lady existence had hardly ever been beyond the barrier; for Pierrotin's replies, "Yes, madame; no, madame——" again and again, plainly showed that the man was only anxious to escape from her too numerous and useless instructions.

"You will put the baggage where it cannot get wet if the weather should change?"

"I have a tarpaulin," said Pierrotin; "and, you see, madame, it is carefully packed away."

"Oscar, do not stay more than a fortnight, even if you are pressed," Madame Clapart went on, coming back to her son. "Do what you will, Madame Moreau will never take to you; beside, you must get home by the end of September. We are going to Belleville, you know, to your Uncle Cardot's."

"Yes, mamma."

"Above all," she added in a low tone, "never talk about servants. Always remember that Madame Moreau was a lady's maid——"

"Yes, mamma."

Oscar, like all young people whose conceit is touchy, seemed much put out by these admonitions delivered in the gateway of the Silver Lion.

"Well, good-by, mamma; we shall soon be off, the horse is put in."

The mother, forgeting that she was in the open street, hugged her Oscar, and taking a nice little roll out of her bag—

"Here," said she, "you were forgetting your bread and

chocolate. Once more, my dear boy, do not eat anything at the inns; you have to pay ten times the value for the smallest morsel."

Oscar wished his mother farther as she stuffed the roll and the chocolate into his pocket.

There were two witnesses to the scene, two young men a few years older than the newly fledged schoolboy, better dressed than he, and without their mothers, their demeanor, dress, and manner proclaiming the entire independence which is the end of every lad's desire while still under direct maternal government. To Oscar, at this moment, these two young fellows epitomized the World.

"*Mamma!* says he," cried one of these strangers, with a laugh.

The words reached Oscar's ears, and in an impulse of intense irritation he shouted out—

"Good-by, mother!"

It must be owned that Madame Clapart spoke rather too loud, and seemed to admit the passers-by to bear witness to her affectionate care.

"What on earth ails you, Oscar?" said the poor woman, much hurt. "I do not understand you," she added severely, fancying she could thus inspire him with respect—a common mistake with women who spoil their children. "Listen, dear Oscar," she went on, resuming her coaxing gentleness, "you have a propensity for talking to everybody, telling everything you know and everything you don't know—out of brag and a young man's foolish self-conceit. I beg you once more to bridle your tongue. You have not seen enough of life, my dearest treasure, to gauge the people you may meet, and there is nothing more dangerous than talking at random in a public conveyance. In a diligence well-bred persons keep silence."

The two young men, who had, no doubt, walked to the end of the yard and back, now made the sound of their boots heard once more under the gateway; they might have heard

this little lecture; and so, to be quit of his mother, Oscar took heroic measures, showing how much self-esteem can stimulate the inventive powers.

"Mamma," said he, "you are standing in a thorough draught, you will catch cold. Beside, I must take my place."

The lad had touched some tender chord, for his mother clasped him in her arms as if he were starting on some long voyage, and saw him into the chaise with tears in her eyes.

"Do not forget to give five francs to the servants," said she. "And write to me at least three times in the course of the fortnight. Behave discreetly, and remember all my instructions. You have enough linen to need none being washed. And, above all, remember all Monsieur Moreau's kindness; listen to him as to a father and follow his advice."

As he got into the chaise Oscar displayed a pair of blue stockings as his trousers slipped up, and the new seat to his trousers as his coat-tails parted. And the smile on the faces of the two young men, who did not fail to see these evidences of honorable poverty, was a fresh blow to Oscar's self-esteem.

"Oscar's place is No. 1," said Madame Clapart to Pierrotin. "Settle yourself in the corner," she went on, still gazing at her son with tender affection.

Oh! how much Oscar regretted his mother's beauty, spoilt by misfortune and sorrow, and the poverty and self-sacrifice that hindered her from being nicely dressed. One of the youngsters—the one who wore boots and spurs—nudged the other with his elbow to point out Oscar's mother, and the other twirled his mustache with an air, as much as to say: "A rather neat figure!"

"How am I to get rid of my mother?" thought Oscar, looking quite anxious.

"What is the matter?" said Madame Clapart.

Oscar pretended not to hear, the wretch! And, perhaps, under the circumstances, Madame Clapart showed want of tact; but an absorbing passion is so selfish!

"Georges, do you like traveling with children?" asked one of the young men of his friend.

"Yes, if they are weaned, and are called Oscar, and have chocolate to eat, my dear Amaury."

These remarks were exchanged in an undertone, leaving Oscar free to hear or not to hear them. His manner would show the young man what he might venture on with the lad to amuse himself in the course of the journey. Oscar would not hear. He looked round to see whether his mother, who weighed on him like a nightmare, was still waiting; but, indeed, he knew she was too fond of him to have deserted him yet. He not only involuntarily compared his traveling companion's dress with his own, but he also felt that his mother's costume counted for something as provoking the young men's mocking smile.

"If only they would go!" thought he.

Alas! Amaury had just said to Georges as he struck the wheel of the chaise with his cane—

"And you are prepared to trust your future career on board this frail vessel?"

"Need must!" replied Georges in a fateful tone.

Oscar heaved a sigh as he noted the youth's hat, cocked cavalierly over one ear to show a fine head of fair hair elaborately curled, while he, by his stepfather's orders, wore his black hair in a brush above his forehead, cut quite short like a soldier's. The vain boy's face was round and chubby, bright with the color of vigorous health; that of "Georges" was long, delicate, and pale. This young man had a broad brow, and his chest filled out a shawl-pattern vest. As Oscar admired his tightly fitting iron-gray trousers and his overcoat, sitting closely to the figure, with Brandenburg braiding and oval buttons, he felt as if the romantic stranger, blessed with so many advantages, were making an unfair display of his superiority, just as an ugly woman is offended by the mere sight of a beauty. The ring of his spurred boot-heels, which

the young man accentuated rather too much for Oscar's liking, went to the boy's heart. In short, Oscar was as uncomfortable in his clothes, home-made perhaps out of his stepfather's old ones, as the other enviable youth was satisfied in his.

"That fellow must have ten francs at least in his pocket," thought Oscar.

The stranger, happening to turn round, what were Oscar's feelings when he discerned a gold chain about his neck—with a gold watch, no doubt, at the end of it.

Living in the Rue de la Cerisaie since 1815, taken to and from school on his holidays by his stepfather Clapart, Oscar had never had any standard of comparison but his mother's poverty-stricken household. Kept very strictly, by Moreau's advice, he rarely went to the play, and then aspired no higher than to the Ambigu-Comique, where little elegance met his gaze, even if the absorbed attention a boy devotes to the stage had allowed him to study the house. His stepfather still wore his watch in a fob in the fashion of the Empire, with a heavy gold chain hanging over his stomach, and ending in a bunch of miscellaneous objects—seals, and a watch-key with a flat round top, in which was set a landscape in mosaic. Oscar, who looked on this out-of-date splendor as the *ne plus ultra* of luxury, was quite bewildered by this revelation of superior and less ponderous elegance. The young man also made an insolent display of a pair of good gloves, and seemed bent on blinding Oscar by his graceful handling of a smart cane with a gold knob.

Oscar had just reached the final stage of boyhood in which trifles are the cause of great joys and great anguish, when a real misfortune seems preferable to a ridiculous costume; and vanity, having no great interests in life to absorb it, centres in frivolities, and dress, and the anxiety to be thought a man. The youth magnifies himself, and his self-assertion is all the more marked because it turns on trifles; still, though he envies a well-dressed noodle, he can be also fired with enthu-

siasm for talent, and admire a man of genius. His faults, when they are not rooted in his heart, only show the exuberance of vitality and a lavish imagination. When a boy of nineteen, an only son, austerely brought up at home as a result of the poverty that weighs so cruelly on a clerk with twelve hundred francs' salary, but worshiped by a mother, who for his sake endures the bitterest privations—when such a boy is dazzled by a youth of two-and-twenty, envies him his frogged coat lined with silk, his sham cashmere vest, and a tie slipped through a vulgar ring, is not this a mere peccadillo such as may be seen in every class of life in the inferior who envies his betters?

Even a man of genius yields to this primitive passion. Did not Rousseau of Geneva envy Venture and Bacle?

But Oscar went on from the peccadillo to the real fault; he felt humiliated; he owed his traveling companion a grudge; and a secret desire surged up in his heart to show him that he was as good a man as he.

The two young bucks walked to and fro, from the gateway to the stables and back, going out to the street; and, as they turned on their heel, they each time looked at Oscar ensconced in his corner. Oscar, convinced that whenever they laughed it was at him, affected profound indifference. He began to hum the tune of a song then in fashion among the Liberals, "*C'est la faute à Voltaire, c'est la faute à Rousseau.*" (It is all the fault of Voltaire and Rousseau.) This assumption, no doubt, made them take him for some underling lawyer's clerk.

"Why, perhaps he sings in the chorus at the opera!" said Amaury.

Exasperated this time, Oscar bounded in his seat; raising the back curtain, he said to Pierrotin—

"When are we to be off?"

"Directly," said the man, who had his whip in his hand, but his eyes fixed on the Rue d'Enghien.

The scene was now enlivened by the arrival of a young man escorted by a perfect pickle of a boy, who appeared with a porter at their heels hauling a barrow by a strap. The young man spoke confidentially to Pierrotin, who wagged his head and hailed his stableman. The man hurried up to help unload the barrow, which contained, beside two trunks, pails, brushes, and boxes of strange shape, a mass of packets and utensils, which the younger of the two new-comers who had climbed to the box-seat stowed and packed away with such expedition that Oscar, smiling at his mother, who was now watching him from the other side of the street, failed to see any of the paraphernalia which might have explained to him in what profession his traveling companions were employed. The boy, about sixteen years of age, wore a holland blouse with a patent-leather belt; his cap, knowingly stuck on one side, proclaimed him a merry youth, as did the picturesque disorder of his curly brown hair tumbling about his shoulders. A black silk tie marked a black line on a very white neck, and seemed to heighten the brightness of his gray eyes. The restless vivacity of a sunburnt, rosy face, the shape of his full lips, his prominent ears, and his turn-up nose—every feature of his face showed the bantering wit of a Figaro and the recklessness of youth, while the quickness of his gestures and saucy glances revealed a keen intelligence, early developed by the practice of a profession taken up in boyhood. This boy, whom art or nature had already made a man, seemed indifferent to the question of dress, as though he were conscious of some intrinsic moral worth; for he looked at his unpolished boots as if he thought them rather a joke, and at his plain drill trousers to note the stains on them, but rather to study the effect than to hide them.

"I have acquired a fine tone!" said he, giving himself a shake, and addressing his companion.

The expression of the senior showed some authority over this youngster, in whom experienced eyes would at once have

discerned the jolly art student, known in French studio slang as a *rapin.*

"Behave, Mistigris!"* replied the master, calling him no doubt by a nickname bestowed on him in the studio.

The elder traveler was a slight and pallid young fellow, with immensely thick black hair in quite fantastic disorder; but this abundant hair seemed naturally necessary to a very large head with a powerful forehead that spoke of precocious intelligence. His curiously puckered face, too peculiar to be called ugly, was as hollow as though this singular young man were suffering either from some chronic malady or from the privations of extreme poverty—which is indeed a terrible chronic malady—or from sorrows too recent to have been forgotten.

His clothes, almost in keeping with those of Mistigris in proportion to his age and dignity, consisted of a much-worn coat of a dull green color, shabby, but quite clean and well brushed, a black vest buttoned to the neck, as the coat was too, only just showing a red handkerchief round his throat. Black trousers, as shabby as the coat, hung loosely round his lean legs. His boots were muddy, showing that he had come far, and on foot. With one swift glance the artist took in the depths of the hostelry of the Silver Lion, the stables, the tones of color, and every detail, and he looked at Mistigris, who had imitated him, with an ironical twinkle.

"Rather nice!" said Mistigris.

"Yes, very nice," replied the other.

"We are still too early," said Mistigris. "Couldn't we snatch a toothful? My stomach, like all nature, abhors a vacuum!"

"Have we time to get a cup of coffee?" said the artist, in a pleasant voice, to Pierrotin.

"Well, don't be long," said Pierrotin.

"We have a quarter of an hour," added Mistigris, thus re-

* The ace of clubs in the game of mouche.

vealing the genius for inference, which is characteristic of the Paris art student.

The couple disappeared. Just then nine o'clock struck in the inn kitchen. Georges thought it only fair and reasonable to appeal to Pierrotin.

"I say, my good friend, when you are the proud possessor of such a shandrydan as this," and he rapped the wheel with his cane, "you should at least make a merit of punctuality. The deuce is in it! we do not ride in that machine for our pleasure, and business must be devilish pressing before we trust our precious selves in it! And that old hack you call Rougeot will certainly not pick up lost time!"

"We will harness on Bichette while those two gentlemen are drinking their coffee," replied Pierrotin. "Go on, you," he added to the stableman, "and see if old Léger means to come with us——"

"Where is your old Léger?" asked Georges.

"Just opposite at Number 50; he couldn't find room in the Beaumont coach," said Pierrotin to his man, paying no heed to Georges, and going off himself in search of Bichette.

Georges shook hands with his friend and got into the chaise, after tossing in a large portfolio, with an air of much importance; this he placed under the cushion. He took the opposite corner to Oscar.

"This 'old Léger' bothers me," said he.

"They cannot deprive us of our places," said Oscar. "Mine is No. 1."

"And mine No. 2," replied Georges.

Just as Pierrotin reappeared, leading Bichette, the stableman returned, having in tow a huge man weighing about two hundred and forty pounds, apparently.

Old Léger was of the class of farmer who, with an enormous stomach and broad shoulders, wears a powdered queue and a light coat of blue linen. His white gaiters were tightly strapped above the knee over corduroy breeches, and finished

off with silver buckles. His hobnailed shoes weighed each a couple of pounds. In his hand he carried a little, knotted red cane, very shiny, and with a heavy knob, secured round his wrist by a leather thong.

"And is it you who are known as old Léger?"* said Georges gravely as the farmer tried to lift his foot to the step of the chaise.

"At your service," said the farmer, showing him a face rather like that of Louis XVIII., with a fat, red jowl, while above it rose a nose which in any other face would have seemed enormous. His twinkling eyes were deep set in rolls of fat.

"Come, lend a hand, my boy," said he to Pierrotin.

The farmer was hoisted in by the driver and the stableman to a shout of "Yo, heave ho!" from Georges.

"Oh! I am not going far; I am only going to la Cave!" said Farmer *Light*, answering a jest with good humor. In France everybody understands a joke.

"Get into the corner," said Pierrotin. "There will be six of you."

"And your other horse?" asked Georges. "Is it as fabulous as the third horse of a post-chaise?"

"There it is, master," said Pierrotin, pointing to the little mare that had come up without calling.

"He calls that insect a horse!" said Georges, astonished.

"Oh, she is a good one to go, is that little mare," said the farmer, who had taken his seat. "Morning, gentlemen. Are we going to weigh anchor, Pierrotin?"

"Two of my travelers are getting a cup of coffee," said the driver.

The young man with the hollow cheeks and his follower now reappeared.

"Come, let us get off," was now the universal cry.

"We are off—we are off!" replied Pierrotin. "Let her

* *Léger*—light.

go," he added to his man, who kicked away the stones that scotched the wheels.

Pierrotin took hold of Rougeot's bridle with an encouraging "*Tclk, tclk,*" to warn the two steeds to pull themselves together; and, torpid as they evidently were, they started the vehicle, which Pierrotin brought to a standstill in front of the gate of the Silver Lion. After this purely preliminary manœuvre, he again looked down the Rue d'Enghien, and vanished, leaving the conveyance in the care of the stableman.

"Well! Is your governor subject to these attacks?" Mistigris asked of the man.

"He is gone to fetch his oats away from the stable," replied the Auvergnat, who was up to all the arts in use to pacify the impatience of travelers.

"After all," said Mistigris, "*time is a great plaster.*"

At that time there was in the Paris studios a mania for distorting proverbs. It was considered a triumph to hit on some change of letters or some rhyming word which should suggest an absurd meaning, or even make it absolute nonsense.*

"And Paris was not gilt in a play," replied his comrade.

Pierrotin now returned, accompanied by the Comte de Sérizy, round the corner of the Rue de l'Echiquier; they had no doubt had a short conversation.

"Père Léger, would you mind giving your place up to Monsieur le Comte? It will trim the chaise better."

"And we shall not be off for an hour yet if you go on like this," said Georges. "You will have to take out that infernal bar we have had such plaguey trouble to fit in, and everybody will have to get out for the last comer. Each of us has a right to the place he booked. What number is this gentleman's? Come, call them over. Have you a way-bill? Do you keep a book? Which is Monsieur le Comte's place? Count of what?"

* To translate these not always funny jests is impossible. I have generally tried for no more than an equivalent rendering.—TRANSLATOR.

"Monsieur le Comte," said Pierrotin, visibly disturbed, "you will not be comfortable."

"Can't you count, man?" said Mistigris. "Short counts make tall friends."

"Mistigris, behave!" said his master quite seriously.

Monsieur de Sérizy was supposed by his fellow-travelers to be some respectable citizen called Lecomte.

"Do not disturb anybody," said the count to Pierrotin; "I will sit in front by you."

"Now, Mistigris," said the young artist, "remember the respect due to age. You don't know how dreadfully old you may live to be. *Manners take the van.* Give up your place to the gentleman."

Mistigris opened the apron of the chaise, and jumped out as nimbly as a frog into the water.

"You cannot sit as *rabbit,* august old man!" said he to Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Mistigris, *Tarts are the end of man,*" said his master.

"Thank you, monsieur," said the count to the artist, by whose side he now took his seat. And the statesman looked with a sagacious eye at the possessors of the back seat, in a way that deeply aggrieved Oscar and Georges.

"We are an hour and a quarter behind time," remarked Oscar.

"People who want a chaise to themselves should book all the places," added Georges.

The Comte de Sérizy, quite sure now that he was not recognized, made no reply, but sat with the expression of a good-natured tradesman.

"And if you had been late, you would have liked us to wait for you, I suppose?" said the farmer to the two young fellows.

Pierrotin was looking out toward the Porte Saint-Denis, and paused for a moment before mounting to the hard box-seat, where Mistigris was kicking his heels.

"If you are still waiting for somebody, I am not the last," remarked the count.

"That is sound reasoning," said Mistigris.

Georges and Oscar laughed very rudely.

"The old gentleman is not strikingly original," said Georges to Oscar, who was enchanted with this apparent alliance.

When Pierrotin had settled himself in his place, he again looked back, but failed to discern in the crowd the two travelers who were wanting to fill up his cargo.

"By the mass, but a couple more passengers would not come amiss," said he.

"Look here, I have not paid; I shall get right out," said Georges in alarm.

"Why, whom do you expect, Pierrotin?" said Léger.

Pierrotin cried "Gee!" in a particular tone, which Rougeot and Bichette knew to mean business at last, and they trotted off toward the hill at a brisk pace, which, however, soon grew slack.

The count had a very red face, quite scarlet indeed, with an inflamed spot here and there, and set off all the more by his perfectly white hair. By any but quite young men this complexion would have been understood as the inflammatory effect on the blood of incessant work. And, indeed, these angry pimples so much disfigured his really noble face that only close inspection could discern in his greenish eyes all the acumen of the judge, the subtlety of the statesman, and the learning of the legislator. His face was somewhat flat; the nose especially looked as if it had been flattened. His hat hid the breadth and beauty of his brow; and, in fact, there was some justification for the laughter of these heedless lads, in the strange contrast between hair as white as silver and thick, bushy eyebrows still quite black. The count, who wore a long, blue overcoat, buttoned to the chin in military

fashion, had a white handkerchief round his neck, cotton-wool in his ears, and a high shirt-collar, showing a square white corner on each cheek. His black trousers covered his boots, of which the tip scarcely showed; he had no ribbon at his buttonhole, and his hands were hidden by his doeskin gloves. Certainly there was nothing in this man which could betray to the lads that he was a peer of France, and one of the most useful men living to his country.

Old Père Léger had never seen the count, who, on the other hand, knew him only by name. Though the count, as he got into the chaise, cast about him the inquiring glance which had so much annoyed Oscar and Georges, it was because he was looking for his notary's clerk, intending to impress on him the need for the greatest secrecy in case he should have been compelled to travel, like himself, by Pierrotin's conveyance. But he was reassured by Oscar's appearance and by that of the old farmer, and, above all, by the air of aping the military, with his mustache and his style generally, which stamped Georges an adventurer; and he concluded that his note had reached Maître Alexandre Crottat in good time.

"Père Léger," said Pierrotin as they came to the steep hill in the Faubourg Saint-Denis, at the Rue de la Fidélité, "suppose we were to walk a bit, heh?" On hearing the name, the count observed—

"I will get out too; we must ease the horses."

"Oh! If you go on at this rate, we shall do fourteen miles in fifteen days!" exclaimed Georges.

"Well, is it any fault of mine," said Pierrotin, "if a passenger wishes to get out?"

"I will give you ten louis if you keep my secret as I bid you," said the count, taking Pierrotin by the arm.

"Oh, ho! My thousand francs!" thought Pierrotin, after giving Monsieur de Sérizy a wink, conveying, "Trust me!"

Oscar and Georges remained in the chaise.

"Look here, Pierrotin—since Pierrotin you are," cried

Georges, when the travelers had gotten into the chaise again at the top of the hill, "if you are going no faster than this, say so. I will pay my fare to Saint-Denis, and hire a nag there, for I have important business on hand, which will suffer from delay."

"Oh! he will get on, never fear," replied the farmer. "And the road is not a long one."

"I am never more than half an hour late," answered Pierrotin.

"Well, well, you are not carting the pope, I suppose," said Georges, "so hurry up a little."

"You ought not to show any favor," said Mistigris; "and if you are afraid of jolting this gentleman"—and he indicated the count—"that is not fair."

"All men are equal in the eye of the *coucou*," said Georges, "as all Frenchmen are in the eye of the Charter."

"Be quite easy," said old Léger, "we shall be at la Chapelle yet before noon." La Chapelle is a village close to the Barrière Saint-Denis.

Those who have traveled know that persons thrown together in a public conveyance do not immediately amalgamate; unless under exceptional circumstances, they do not converse till they are well on their way. This silent interval is spent partly in reciprocal examination, and partly in finding each his own place and taking possession of it. The soul, as much as the body, needs to find its balance. When each, severally, supposes that he has made an accurate guess at his companion's age, profession, and temper, the most talkative first opens a conversation, which is taken up all the more eagerly because all feel the need for cheering the way and dispelling the dullness.

This, at least, is what happens in a French coach. In other countries manners are different. The English pride themselves on never opening their lips; a German is dull in a coach; Italians are too cautious to chat; the Spaniards have

almost ceased to have any coaches; and the Russians have no roads. So it is only in the ponderous French diligence that the passengers amuse each other, in the gay and gossiping nation where each one is eager to laugh and display his humor, where everything is enlivened by raillery, from the misery of the poorest to the solid interests of the upper middle-class. The police do little to check the license of speech, and the gallery of the Chambers has made discussion fashionable.

When a youngster of two-and-twenty, like the young gentleman who was known so far by the name of Georges, has a ready wit, he is strongly tempted, especially in such circumstances as these, to be reckless in the use of it. In the first place, Georges was not slow to come to the conclusion that he was the superior man of the party. He decided that the count was a manufacturer of the second class, setting him down as a cutler; the shabby-looking youth attended by Mistigris he thought but a greenhorn, Oscar a perfect simpleton, and the farmer a capital butt for a practical joke. Having thus taken the measure of all his traveling companions, he determined to amuse himself at their expense.

"Now," thought he, as the *coucou* rolled down the hill from la Chapelle toward the plain of Saint-Denis, "shall I pass myself off as Étienne or as Béranger? No, these bumpkins have never heard of either. A Carbonaro? The devil! I might be nabbed. One of Marshal Ney's sons? Pooh, what could I make of that? Tell them the story of my father's death? That would hardly be funny. Suppose I were to have come back from the Government colony in America? They might take me for a spy, and regard me with suspicion. I will be a Russian prince in disguise; I will cram them with fine stories about the Emperor Alexander! Or if I pretended to be Cousin, the Professor of Philosophy? How I could mystify them! No, that limp creature with the towzled hair looks as if he might have kicked his heels at lecture at the Sorbonne. Oh, why didn't I think sooner of trotting them

out? I can imitate an Englishman so well, I might have been Lord Byron traveling *incog.* Hang it! I have missed my chance. The executioner's son? Not a bad way of clearing a space at breakfast. Oh! I know! I will have been in command of the troops under Ali, the Pasha of Janina."

While he was lost in these meditations, the chaise was making its way through the clouds of dust which constantly blow up from the side-paths of this much-trodden road.

"What a dust!" said Mistigris.

"King Henri is dead," retorted his comrade. "If you said it smelt of vanilla now, you would hit on a new idea!"

"You think that funny," said Mistigris. "Well, but it does now and then remind me of vanilla."

"In the East——" Georges began, meaning to concoct a story.

"In the least——" said Mistigris' master, taking up Georges.

"In the East, I said, from whence I have just returned," Georges repeated, "the dust smells very sweet. But here it smells of nothing unless it is wafted up from such a manure-heap as this."

"You have just returned from the East?" said Mistigris, with a sly twinkle.

"And, you see, Mistigwis, the gentleman is so tired that what he now wequires is west," drawled his master.

"You are not much sunburnt," said Mistigris.

"Oh! I am but just out of bed after three months' illness, caused, the learned doctors say, by an attack of suppressed plague."

"You have had the plague?" cried the count, with a look of horror. "Pierrotin, put me out."

"Get on, Pierrotin," said Mistigris. "You hear that the plague was suppressed," he went on, addressing Monsieur de Sérizy. "It was the sort of plague that only comes out in the course of conversation."

"The plague of which one merely says, 'Plague take it!'" cried the artist.

"Or plague take the man!" added Mistigris.

"Mistigris," said his master, "I shall put you out to walk if you get into mischief. So you have been in the East, monsieur?" he went on, turning to Georges.

"Yes, monsieur. First in Egypt and then in Greece, where I served under Ali Pasha of Janina, with whom I had a desperate row. The climate is too much for most men; and the excitements of all kinds that are part of an Oriental life wrecked my liver."

"Oh, ho, a soldier?" said the burly farmer. "Why, how old are you?"

"I am nine-and-twenty," said Georges, and all his fellow-travelers looked at him. "At eighteen I served as a private in the famous campaign of 1813; but I only was present at the battle of Hanau, where I won the rank of sergeant-major. In France, at Montereau, I was made sub-lieutenant, and I was decorated by—no spies here?—by the Emperor."

"And you do not wear the cross of your order?" said Oscar.

"A cross given by the present set?* Thank you for nothing. Beside, who that is anybody wears his decorations when traveling? Look at monsieur," he went on, indicating the Comte de Sérizy, "I will bet you anything you please——"

"Betting anything you please is the same thing in France as not betting at all," said Mistigris' master.

"I will bet you anything you please," Georges repeated pompously, "that he is covered with stars."

"I have, in fact," said Monsieur de Sérizy, with a laugh, "the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor, the Grand Cross of Saint-Andrew of Russia, of the Eagle of Prussia, of the Order of the Annunciada of Sardinia, and of the Golden Fleece."

* *Ceux-ci.*

"Is that all?" said Mistigris. "And it all rides in a public chaise?"

"He is going it, is the brick-red man?" said Georges in a whisper to Oscar. "What did I tell you?" he remarked aloud. "I make no secret of it, I am devoted to the Emperor!"

"I served under him," said the count.

"And what a man! Wasn't he?" cried Georges.

"A man to whom I am under great obligations," replied the count, with a well-affected air of stupidity.

"For your crosses?" asked Mistigris.

"And what quantities of snuff he took!" replied Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Yes, he carried it loose in his waistcoat pockets."

"So I have been told," said the farmer, with a look of incredulity.

"And not only that, but he chewed and smoked," Georges went on. "I saw him smoking in the oddest way at Waterloo when Marshal Soult lifted him up bodily and flung him into his traveling carriage, just as he had seized a musket and wanted to charge the English!"

"So you were at Waterloo?" said Oscar, opening his eyes very wide.

"Yes, young man, I went through the campaign of 1815. At Mont Saint-Jean I was made captain, and I retired on the Loire when we were disbanded. But, on my honor, I was sick of France, and I could not stay. No, I should have got myself into some scrape. So I went off with two or three others of the same sort, Selves, Besson, and some more, who are in Egypt to this day in the service of Mohammed Pasha, and a queer fellow he is, I can tell you! He was a tobacconist at la Cavalle, and is now on the way to be a reigning prince. You have seen him in Horace Vernet's picture of the 'Massacre of the Mamelukes.' Such a handsome man! I never would abjure the faith of my fathers and adopt Islam;

all the more because the ceremony involves a surgical operation for which I had no liking. Beside, no one respects a renegade. If they had offered me a hundred thousand francs a year, then, indeed—and yet—no. The pasha made me a present of a thousand *talari.*"

"How much is that?" asked Oscar, who was all ears.

"Oh, no great matter. The talaro is much the same as a five-franc piece. And, on my honor, I did not earn enough to pay for the vices I learned in that thundering vile country—if you can call it a country. I cannot live now without smoking my narghileh twice a day, and it is very expensive and——"

"And what is Egypt like?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Egypt is all sand," replied Georges, quite undaunted. "There is nothing green but the Nile valley. Draw a green strip on a sheet of yellow paper, and there you have Egypt. The Egyptians, the fellaheen, have, I may remark, one great advantage over us; there are no gendarmes. You may go from one end of Egypt to the other, and you will not find one."

"But I suppose there are a good many Egyptians," said Mistigris.

"Not so many as you would think," answered Georges. "There are more Abyssinians, Giaours, Vechabites, Bedouins, and Copts. However, all these creatures are so very far from amusing that I was only too glad to embark on a Genoese polacra, bound for the Ionian Islands to take up powder and ammunition for Ali of Tebelen. As you know, the English sell powder and ammunition to all nations, to the Turks and the Greeks; they would sell them to the devil if the devil had money. So from Zante we were to luff up to the coast of Greece.

"And, I tell you, take me as you see me, the name of Georges is famous in those parts. I am the grandson of that famous Czerni-Georges who made war on the Porte; but in-

stead of breaking it down, he was unluckily smashed up. His son took refuge in the house of the French Consul at Smyrna, and came to Paris in 1792, where he died before I, his seventh child, was born. Our treasure was stolen from us by a friend of my grandfather's, so we were ruined. My mother lived by selling her diamonds one by one, till in 1799 she married Monsieur Yung, a contractor, and my stepfather. But my mother died; I quarreled with my stepfather, who, between ourselves, is a rascal; he is still living, but we never meet. The wretch left us all seven to our fate without a word, or bit or sup. And that is how, in 1813, in sheer despair, I went off as a conscript. You cannot imagine with what joy Ali of Tebelen hailed the grandson of Czerni-Georges. Here I call myself simply Georges. The pasha gave me a seraglio for——"

"You had a seraglio?" said Oscar.

"Were you a pasha with many tails?" asked Mistigris.

"How is it that you don't know that there is but one sultan who can create pashas?" said Georges, "and my friend Tebelen—for we were friends, like two Bourbons—was a rebel against the padischah. You know—or you don't know—that the grand seignior's correct title is padischah, and not the grand turk or the sultan.

"Do not suppose that a seraglio is any great matter. You might just as well have a flock of goats. Their women are great fools, and I like the grisettes of the *Chaumière* (cottages) at Mont-Parnasse a thousand times better."

"And they are much nearer," said the Comte de Sérizy.

"These women of the seraglio never know a word of French, and language is indispensable to an understanding. Ali gave me five lawful wives and ten slave girls. At Janina that was a mere nothing. In the East, you see, it is very bad style to have wives; you have them, but as we here have our Voltaire and our Rousseau; who ever looks into his Voltaire or his Rousseau? Nobody. And yet it is quite the right

thing to be jealous. You may tie a woman up in a sack and throw her into the water on a mere suspicion by an article of their Code."

"Did you throw any in?"

"I? What! a Frenchman! I was devoted to them."

Whereupon Georges twirled up his mustache, and assumed a pensive air.

By this time they were at Saint-Denis, and Pierrotin drew up at the door of the inn where the famous cheese-cakes are sold, and where all travelers call. The count, really puzzled by the mixture of truth and nonsense in Georges' rhodomontade, jumped into the carriage again, looked under the cushion for the portfolio which Pierrotin had told him that this mysterious youth had bestowed there, and saw on it in gilt letters the words, "Maître Crottat, Notaire." The count at once took the liberty of opening the case, fearing, with good reason, that if he did not, Farmer Léger might be possessed with similar curosity; and taking out the deed relating to the Moulineaux farm, he folded it up, put it in the side-pocket of his coat, and came back to join his fellow-travelers.

"This Georges is neither more nor less than Crottat's junior clerk. I will congratulate his master, who ought to have sent his head-clerk."

From the respectful attention of the farmer and Oscar, Georges perceived that in them at least he had two ardent admirers. Of course, he put on lordly airs; he treated them to cheese-cakes and a glass of Alicante, and offered the same to Mistigris and his master, which they refused, asking them their names on the strength of this munificence.

"Oh, monsieur," said the elder, "I am not the proud owner of so illustrious a name as yours, and I have not come home from Asia." The count, who had made haste to get back to the vast inn kitchen, so as to excite no suspicions, came in time to hear the end of the reply. "I am simply a poor painter just returned from Rome, where I went at the

expense of the Government after winning the Grand Prize five years ago. My name is Schinner."

"Halloo, master, may I offer you a glass of Alicante and some cheese-cakes?" cried Georges to the count.

"Thank you, no," said the count. "I never come out till I have had my cup of coffee and cream."

"And you never eat anything between meals? How *Marais, Place Royale, Ile Saint-Louis!*" exclaimed Georges. "When he crammed us just now about his orders, I fancied him better fun than he is," he went on in a low voice to the painter; "but we will get him on to that subject again—the little tallow-chandler. Come, boy," said he to Oscar, "drink the glass that was poured out for the grocer, it will make your mustache grow."

Oscar, anxious to play the man, drank the second glass of wine, and ate three more cheese-cakes.

"Very good wine it is!" said old Léger, smacking his tongue.

"And all the better," remarked Georges, "because it comes from Bercy. I have been to Alicante, and, I tell you, this is no more like the wine of that country than my arm is like a windmill. Our manufactured wines are far better than the natural products. Come, Pierrotin, have a glass. What a pity it is that your horses cannot each drink one; we should get on faster!"

"Oh, that is unnecessary, as I have a gray horse already," said Pierrotin (*gris*, which means gray, meaning also *screwed*).

Oscar, as he heard the vulgar pun, thought Pierrotin a marvel of wit.

"Off!" cried Pierrotin, cracking his whip, as soon as the passengers had once more packed themselves into the vehicle.

It was by this time eleven o'clock. The weather, which had been rather dull, now cleared; the wind swept away the clouds; the blue sky shone out here and there; and by the

time Pierrotin's chaise was fairly started on the ribbon of road between Saint-Denis and Pierrefitte, the sun had finally drunk up the last filmy haze that hung like a diaphanous veil over the views from this famous suburb.

"Well, and why did you throw over your friend the pasha?" said the farmer to Georges.

"He was a very queer customer," replied Georges, with an air of hiding many mysteries. "Only think, he put me in command of his cavalry! Very well——"

"That," thought poor Oscar, "is why he wears spurs."

"At that time, Ali of Tebelen wanted to rid himself of Chosrew Pasha, another queer fish. Chaureff you call him here, but in Turkey they call him Cosserev. You must have read in the papers at the time that old Ali had beaten Chosrew and pretty soundly, too. Well, but for me, Ali would have been done for some days sooner. I led the right wing, and I saw Chosrew, the old sneak, just charging the centre—oh, yes, I can tell you, as straight and steady a move as if he had been Murat. Good! I took my time, and I charged at full speed, cutting Chosrew's column in two parts, for he had pushed through our centre, and had no cover. You understand——

"After it was all over Ali fairly kissed me."

"Is that the custom in the East?" said the Comte de Sérizy, with a touch of irony.

"Yes, monsieur, as it is everywhere," answered the painter.

"We drove Chosrew back over thirty leagues of country—like a hunt, I tell you," Georges went on. "Splendid horsemen are the Turks. Ali gave me yataghans, guns, and swords: 'Take as many as you like.' When we got back to the capital, that incredible creature made proposals to me that did not suit my views at all. He wanted to adopt me as his favorite, his heir. But I had had enough of the life; for, after all, Ali of Tebelen was a rebel against the Porte, and I thought it wiser to clear out. But I must do Monsieur de

Tebelen justice, he loaded me with presents; diamonds, ten thousand talari, a thousand pieces of gold, a fair Greek girl for a page, a little Arnaute maid for company, and an Arab horse. Well, there! Ali, the Pasha of Janina, is an unappreciated man; he lacks a historian. Nowhere but in the East do you meet with these iron souls who, for twenty years, strain every nerve, only to be able to take a revenge one fine morning.

"In the first place, he had the grandest white beard you ever saw, and a hard, stern face—"

"But what became of your treasure?" asked the farmer.

"Ah! there you are! Those people have no State funds nor Bank of France; so I packed my money-bags on board a Greek tartane, which was captured by the capitan-pasha himself. Then I myself, as you see me, was within an ace of being impaled at Smyrna. Yes, on my honor, but for Monsieur de Rivière, the ambassador, who happened to be on the spot, I should have been executed as an ally of Ali Pasha's. I saved my head, or I could not speak so plainly; but as for the ten thousand talari, the thousand pieces of gold, and the weapons, oh! that was all swallowed down by that greedy-guts the capitan-pasha. My position was all the more ticklish because the capitan-pasha was Chosrew himself. After the dressing he had had, the scamp had got this post, which is equal to that of high admiral in France."

"But he had been in the cavalry, as I understood?" said old Léger, who had been listening attentively to this long story.

"Dear me, how little the East is understood in the Department of Seine et Oise!" exclaimed Georges. "Monsieur, the Turks are like that. You are a farmer, the padischah makes you a field-marshal; if you do not fulfill your duties to his satisfaction, so much the worse for you. Off with your head! That is his way of dismissing you. A gardener is made prefect, and a prime minister is a private

once more. The Ottomans know no laws of promotion or hierarchy. Chosrew, who had been a horseman, was now a sailor. The Padischah Mohammed had instructed him to fall on Ali by sea; and he had, in fact, mastered him, but only by the help of the English, who got the best of the booty, the thieves! They laid hands on the treasure.

"This Chosrew, who had not forgotten the riding-lesson I had given him, recognized me at once. As you may suppose, I was settled—oh! done for!—if it had not occurred to me to appeal, as a Frenchman and a troubadour, to Monsieur de Rivière. The ambassador, delighted to assert himself, demanded my release. The Turks have this great merit, they are as ready to let you go as to cut off your head; they are indifferent to everything. The French consul, a charming man, and a friend of Chosrew's, got him to restore two thousand talari, and his name, I may say, is graven on my heart——"

"And his name——?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

He could not forbear a look of surprise when Georges, in fact, mentioned the name of one of our most distinguished consuls-general, who was at Smyrna at the time.

"I was present, as it fell out, at the execution of the Commandant of Smyrna, the padischah having ordered Chosrew to put him to death—one of the most curious things I ever saw, though I have seen many. I will tell you all about it by-and-by at breakfast.

"From Smyrna I went to Spain, on hearing there was a revolution there. I went straight to Mina, who took me for an aide-de-camp, and gave me the rank of colonel. So I fought for the Constitutional party, which is going to the dogs, for we shall walk into Spain one of these days."

"And you a French officer!" said the Comte de Sérizy severely. "You are trusting very rashly to the discretion of your hearers."

"There are no spies among them," said Georges.

"And does it not occur to you, Colonel Georges," said the count, "that at this very time a conspiracy is being inquired into by the Chamber of Peers, which makes the Government very strict in its dealings with soldiers who bear arms against France, or who aid in intrigues abroad tending to the overthrow of any legitimate sovereign?"

At this ominous remark, the painter reddened up to his ears, and glanced at Mistigris, who was speechless.

"Well, and what then?" asked old Léger.

"Why, if I by chance were a magistrate, would it not be my duty to call on the gendarmes of the Brigade at Pierrefitte to arrest Mina's aide-de-camp," said the count, "and to summons all who are in this chaise as witnesses?"

This speech silenced Georges all the more effectually because the vehicle was just passing the Police Station, where the white flag was, to use a classical phrase, floating on the breeze.

"You have too many orders to be guilty of such mean conduct," said Oscar.

"We will play him a trick yet," whispered Georges to Oscar.

"Colonel," said Léger, very much discomfited by the count's outburst, and anxious to change the subject, "in the countries where you have traveled, what is the farming like? What are their crops in rotation?"

"In the first place, my good friend, you must understand that the people are too busy smoking weeds to burn them on the land——"

The count could not help smiling, and his smile reassured the narrator.

"And they have a way of cultivating the land which you will think strange. They do not cultivate it at all; that is their system. The Turks and Greeks eat onions or rice; they collect opium from their poppies, which yields a large revenue, and tobacco grows almost wild—their famous Latakia. Then there are dates, bunches of sugar-plums, that grow without any

trouble. It is a country of endless resources and trade. Quantities of carpets are made at Smyrna, and not dear."

"Ay," said the farmer, "but if the carpets are made of wool, wool comes from sheep; and to have sheep, they must have fields, farms, and farming——"

"There must, no doubt, be something of the kind," replied Georges. "But rice, in the first place, grows in water; and then I have always been near the coast, and have only seen the country devastated by war. Beside, I have a perfect horror of statistics."

"And the taxes?" said the farmer.

"Ah! the taxes are heavy. The people are robbed of everything, and allowed to keep the rest. The Pasha of Egypt, struck by the merits of this system, was organizing the administration on that basis when I left."

"But how?" said old Léger, who was utterly puzzled.

"How?" echoed Georges. "There are collectors who seize the crops, leaving the peasants just enough to live on. And by that system there is no trouble with papers and red tape, the plague of France. There you are!"

"But what right have they to do it?" asked the farmer.

"It is the land of despotism, that's all. Did you never hear Montesquieu's fine definition of Despotism—'Like the savage, it cuts the tree down to gather the fruit.'"

"And that is what they want to bring us to!" cried Mistigris. "But a burnt rat dreads the mire."

"And it is what we shall come to," exclaimed the Comte de Sérizy. "Those who hold land will be wise to sell it. Monsieur Schinner must have seen how such things are done in Italy."

"*Corpo di Bacco!* The pope is not behind his times. But they are used to it there. The Italians are such good people! So long as they are allowed to do a little highway murdering of travelers, they are quite content."

"But you, too, do not wear the ribbon of the Legion of

Honor that was given you in 1819," remarked the count. "Is the fashion universal?"

Mistigris and the false Schinner reddened up to their very hair.

"Oh, with me it is different," replied Schinner. "I do not wish to be recognized. Do not betray me, monsieur. I mean to pass for a quite unimportant painter; in fact, a mere decorator. I am going to a gentleman's house where I am anxious to excite no suspicion."

"Oh, ho!" said the count, "a lady! a love affair! How happy you are to be young!"

Oscar, who was bursting in his skin with envy at being nobody and having nothing to say, looked from Colonel Czerni-Georges to Schinner the great artist, wondering whether he could not make something of himself. But what could he be, a boy of nineteen, packed off to spend a fortnight or three weeks in the country with the steward of Presles? The Alicante had gone to his head, and his conceit was making the blood boil in his veins. Thus, when the sham Schinner seemed to hint at some romantic adventure of which the joys must be equal to the danger, he gazed at him with eyes flashing with rage and envy.

"Ah!" said the count, with a look half of envy and half of incredulity, "you must love a woman very much to make such sacrifices for her sake."

"What sacrifices?" asked Mistigris.

"Don't you know, my little friend, that a ceiling painted by so great a master is covered with gold in payment?" replied the count. "Why, if the Civil List pays you thirty thousand francs for those of the two rooms in the Louvre," he went on, turning to Schinner, "you would certainly charge a humble individual, a bourgeois, as you call us in your studios, twenty thousand for a ceiling, while an unknown decorator would hardly get two thousand francs."

"The money loss is not the worst of it," replied Mistigris.

"You must consider that it will be a masterpiece, and that he must not sign it for fear of compromising *her*."

"Ah! I would gladly restore all my orders to the sovereigns of Europe to be loved as a young man must be, to be moved to such devotion!" cried Monsieur de Sérizy.

"Ay, there you are," said Mistigris. "A man who is young is beloved of many women; and as the saying goes, there is safety in grumblers."

"And what does Madame Schinner say to it?" asked the count, "for you married for love the charming Adélaïde de Rouville,* the niece of old Admiral Kergarouët, who got you the work at the Louvre, I believe, through the interest of his nephew the Comte de Fontaine."

"Is a painter ever a married man when he is traveling?" asked Mistigris.

"That, then, is Studio morality?" exclaimed the count in an idiomatic way.

"Is the morality of the courts where you got your orders any better?" said Schinner, who had recovered his presence of mind, which had deserted him for a moment when he heard that the count was so well informed as to the commission given to the real Schinner.

"I never asked for one," replied the count. "I flatter myself that they were all honestly earned."

"And it becomes you like a pig in dress-boots," said Mistigris.

Monsieur de Sérizy would not betray himself; he put on an air of stupid good-nature as he looked out over the valley of Groslay, into which they diverged where the roads fork, taking the road to Saint-Brice, and leaving that to Chantilly on their right.

"Ay, take that!" said Oscar between his teeth.

"And is Rome as fine as it is said to be?" Georges asked of the painter.

See "The Purse."

"Rome is fine only to those who love it; you must have a passion for it to be happy there; but, as a town, I prefer Venice, though I was near being assassinated there."

"My word! But for me," said Mistigris, "your goose would have been cooked! It was that rascal Lord Byron who played you that trick. That devil of an Englishman was as mad as a hatter!"

"Hold your tongue," said Schinner. "I won't have anything known of my affair with Lord Byron."

"But you must confess," said Mistigris, "that you were very glad, indeed, that I had learned to 'box' in our French fashion?"

Now and again Pierrotin and the count exchanged significant glances, which would have disturbed men a little more worldly-wise than these five fellow-travelers.

"Lords and pashas, and ceilings worth thirty thousand francs! Bless me!" cried the l'Isle-Adam carrier, "I have crowned heads on board to-day. What handsome tips I shall get!"

"To say nothing of the places being paid for," said Mistigris slily.

"It comes in the nick of time," Pierrotin went on. "For, you know, my fine new coach, Père Léger, for which I paid two thousand francs on account—well, those swindling coach-builders, to whom I am to pay two thousand five hundred francs to-morrow, would not take fifteen hundred francs down and a bill for a thousand at two months. The vultures insist on it all in ready money. Fancy being as hard as that on a man who has traveled this road for eight years, the father of a family, and putting him in danger of losing everything, money and coach both, for lack of a wretched sum of a thousand francs! Gee up, Bichette. They would not dare to do it to one of the big companies, I lay a wager."

"Bless me! No thong, no crupper!" said the student.

"You have only eight hundred francs to seek," replied the

count, understanding that this speech, addressed to the farmer, was a sort of bill drawn on himself.

"That's true," said Pierrotin. "Come up, Rougeot; there, Bichette!"

"You must have seen some fine-painted ceilings at Venice," said the count, speaking to Schinner.

"I was too desperately in love to pay any attention to what at the time seemed to me mere trifles," replied Schinner. "And yet I might have been cured of love-affairs; for in the Venetian States themselves, in Dalmatia, I had just had a sharp lesson."

"Can you tell the tale?" asked Georges. "I know Dalmatia."

"Well, then, if you have been there, you know, of course, that up in that corner of the Adriatic they are all old pirates, outlaws, and corsairs retired from business, when they have escaped hanging, all——"

"Uscoques, in short," said Georges.

On hearing this, the right name, the count, whom Napoleon had sent into the province of Illyria, looked sharply round, so much was he astonished.

"It was in the town where the maraschino is made," said Schinner, seeming to try to remember a name.

"Zara," said Georges. "Yes, I have been there; it is on the coast."

"You have hit it," said the painter. "I went there to see the country, for I have a passion for landscape. Twenty times have I made up my mind to try landscape painting, which no one understands, in my opinion, but Mistigris, who will one of these days be a Hobbema, Ruysdael, Claude Lorraine, Poussin, and all the tribe in one."

"Well," exclaimed the count, "if he is but one of them, he will do."

"If you interrupt so often we shall never know where we are."

"Beside, our friend here is not speaking to you," added Georges to the count.

"It is not good manners to interrupt," said Mitigris sententiously. "However, we did the same; and we should all be the losers if we didn't diversify the conversation by an exchange of reflections. All Frenchmen are equal in a public chaise, as the grandson of Czerni-Georges told us. So pray go on, delightful old man, more of your bunkum. It is quite the correct thing in the best society; and you know the saying, Do in Turkey as the Turkeys do."

"I had heard wonders of Dalmatia," Schinner went on. "So off I went, leaving Mistigris at the inn at Venice."

"At the *locanda*," said Mistigris; "put in the local color."

"Zara is, as I have been told, a vile hole——"

"Yes," said Georges; "but it is fortified."

"I should say so!" replied Schinner, "and the fortifications are an important feature in my story. At Zara there are a great many apothecaries, and I lodged with one of them. In foreign countries the principal business of every native is to let lodgings, his trade is purely accessory.

"In the evening, when I had changed my shirt, I went out on my balcony. Now on the opposite balcony I perceived a woman—oh! But a woman! A Greek; that says everything, the loveliest creature in all the town. Almond eyes, eyelids that came down over them like blinds, and lashes like paint-brushes; an oval face that might have turned Raphael's brain, a complexion of exquisite hue, melting tones, a skin of velvet —hands—oh!"

"And not moulded in butter like those of David's school," said Mistigris.

"You insist on talking like a painter!" cried Georges.

"There, you see! drive nature out with a pitchfork and it comes back in a paint-box," replied Mistigris.

"And her costume—a genuine Greek costume," Schinner went on. "As you may suppose, I was in flames. I ques-

tioned my Diafoirus, and he informed me that my fair neighbor's name was Zéna. I changed my shirt. To marry Zéna, her husband, an old villain, had paid her parents three hundred thousand francs, the girl's beauty was so famous; and she really was the loveliest creature in all Dalmatia, Illyria, and the Adriatic. In that part of the world you buy your wife and without having seen her——"

"I will not go there," said old Léger.

"My sleep, some nights, is illuminated by Zéna's eyes," said Schinner. "Her adoring young husband was sixty-seven. Good! But he was as jealous—not as a tiger, for they say a tiger is as jealous as a Dalmatian, and my man was worse than a Dalmatian; he was equal to three Dalmatians and a half. He was an Uscoque, a turkey-cock, a high cockalorum game-cock!"

"In short, the worthy hero of a cock-and-bull story," said Mistigris.

"Good for you!" replied Georges, laughing.

"After being a corsair, and perhaps a pirate, my man thought no more of spitting a Christian than I do of spitting out of window," Schinner went on. "A pretty lookout for me. And rich—rolling in millions, the old villain! And as ugly as a pirate may be, for some pasha had wanted his ears, and he had dropped an eye somewhere on his travels. But my Uscoque made good use of the one he had, and you may take my word for it when I tell you he had eyes all round his head. 'Never does he let his wife out of his sight,' said my little Diafoirus. 'If she should require your services, I would take your place in disguise,' said I. 'It is a trick that is very successful in our stage-plays.' It would take too long to describe the most delightful period of my life, three days, to wit, that I spent at my window ogling Zéna, and putting on a clean shirt every morning. The situation was all the more ticklish and exciting because the least gesture bore some dangerous meaning. Finally, Zéna, no doubt, came to the

conclusion that in all the world none but a foreigner, a Frenchman, and an artist would be capable of making eyes at her in the midst of the perils that surrounded him; so, as she execrated her hideous pirate, she responded to my gaze with glances that were enough to lift a man into the vault of paradise without any need of pulleys. I was screwed up higher and higher! I was tuned to the pitch of Don Quixote. At last I exclaimed: 'Well, the old wretch may kill me, but here goes!' Not a landscape did I study; I was studying my corsair's lair. At night, having put on my most highly scented clean shirt, I crossed the street and I went in——"

"Into the house?" cried Oscar.

"Into the house?" said Georges.

"Into the house," repeated Schinner.

"Well! you are as bold as brass!" cried the farmer. "I wouldn't have gone, that's all I can say——"

"With all the more reason that you would have stuck in the door," replied Schinner. "Well, I went in," he continued, "and I felt two hands which took hold of mine. I said nothing; for those hands, as smooth as the skin of an onion, impressed silence on me. A whisper in my ear said in Venetian, 'He is asleep.' Then, being sure that no one would meet us, Zéna and I went out on the ramparts for an airing, but escorted, if you please, by an old duenna as ugly as sin, who stuck to us like a shadow; and I could not induce Madame la Pirate to dismiss this ridiculous attendant.

"Next evening we did the same; I wanted to send the old woman home; Zéna refused. As my fair one spoke Greek, and I spoke Venetian, we could come to no understanding—we parted in anger! Said I to myself, as I changed my shirt: 'Next time surely there will be no old woman, and we can make friends again, each in our mother tongue.' Well, and it was the old woman that saved me, as you shall hear. It was so fine that, to divert suspicion, I went out to look about me, after we had made it up, of course. After walking round

the ramparts, I was coming quietly home with my hands in my pockets when I saw the street packed full of people. Such a crowd! as if there was an execution. This crowd rushed at me. I was arrested, handcuffed, and led off in charge of the police. No, you cannot imagine, and I hope you may never know, what it is to be supposed to be a murderer by a frenzied mob, throwing stones at you, yelling after you from top to bottom of the high street of a country town, and pursuing you with threats of death! Every eye is a flame of fire, abuse is on every lip, these firebrands of loathing flare up above a hideous cry of 'Kill him! down with the murderer!' a sort of bass in the background."

"So your Dalmatians yelled in French?" said the count. "You describe the scene as if it had happened yesterday."

Schinner was for the moment dumfounded.

"The mob speaks the same language everywhere," said Mistigris the politician.

"Finally," Schinner went on again, "when I was in the local Court of Justice and in the presence of the judges of that country, I was informed that the diabolical corsair was dead, poisoned by Zéna. How I wished I could put on a clean shirt!

"On my soul, I knew nothing about this melodrama. It would seem that the fair Greek was wont to add a little opium —poppies are so plentiful there, as monsieur has told you—to her pirate's grog to secure a few minutes' liberty to take a walk, and the night before the poor woman had made a mistake in the dose. It was the damned corsair's money that made the trouble for my Zéna; but she accounted for everything so simply that I was released at once on the strength of the old woman's affidavit, with an order from the mayor of the town and the Austrian commissioner of police to remove myself to Rome. Zéna, who allowed the heirs and the officers of the law to help themselves liberally to the Uscoque's wealth, was let off, I was told, with two years' seclusion in a convent,

where she still is. I will go back and paint her portrait, for in a few years everything will be forgotten. And these are the follies of eighteen!"

"Yes, and you left me without a sou in the *locanda* at Venice," said Mistigris. "I made my way from Venice to Rome, to see if I could find you, by daubing portraits at five francs a head, and never got paid; but it was a jolly time! Happiness, they say, does not dwell under gilt hoofs."

"You may imagine the reflections that choked me with bile in a Dalmatian prison, thrown there without a protector, having to answer to the Dalmatian Austrians, and threatened with the loss of my head for having twice taken a walk with a woman who insisted on being followed by her housekeeper. That is what I call bad luck!" cried Schinner.

"What," said Oscar guilelessly, "did that happen to you?"

"Why not to this gentleman, since it had already happened during the French occupation of Illyria to one of our most distinguished artillery officers?" said the count with meaning.

"And did you believe the artillery man?" asked Mistigris slily.

"And is that all?" asked Oscar.

"Well," said Mistigris, "he cannot tell you that he had his head cut off. Those who live last live longest."

"And are there any farms out there?" asked old Léger. "What do they grow there?"

"There is the maraschino crop," said Mistigris. "A plant that grows just as high as your lips and yields the liqueur of that name."

"Ah!" said Léger.

"I was only three days in the town and a fortnight in prison," replied Schinner. "I saw nothing, not even the fields where they grow the maraschino."

"They are making game of you," said Georges to the farmer. "Maraschino grows in cases."

"Romances alter cases," remarked Mistigris.

Pierrotin's chaise was now on the way down one of the steep sides of the valley of Saint-Brice, toward the inn in the middle of that large village, where he was to wait an hour to let his horses take breath, eat their oats, and get a drink. It was now about half-past one.

"Halloo! It is Farmer Léger!" cried the innkeeper, as the vehicle drew up at his door. "Do you take breakfast?"

"Once every day," replied the burly customer. "We can eat a snack."

"Order breakfast for us," said Georges, carrying his cane as if he were shouldering a musket, in a cavalier style that bewitched Oscar.

Oscar felt a pang of frenzy when he saw this reckless adventurer take a fancy straw cigar-case out of his side-pocket, and from it a beautiful tan-colored cigar, which he smoked in the doorway while waiting for the meal.

"Do you smoke?" said Georges to Oscar.

"Sometimes," said the schoolboy, puffing out his little chest and assuming a dashing style.

Georges held out the open cigar-case to Oscar and to Schinner.

"The devil!" said the great painter. "Ten-sous cigars!"

"The remains of what I brought from Spain," said the adventurer. "Are you going to have breakfast?"

"No," said the artist. "They will wait for me at the castle. Beside, I had some food before starting."

"And you?" said Georges to Oscar.

"I have had breakfast," said Oscar.

Oscar would have given ten years of his life to have boots and trouser-straps. He stood sneezing, and choking, and spitting, and sucking up the smoke with ill-disguised grimaces.

"You don't know how to smoke," said Schinner. "Look here," and Schinner, without moving a muscle, drew in the smoke of his cigar and blew it out through his nose without the slightest effort. Then again he kept the smoke in his

throat, took the cigar out of his mouth, and exhaled it gracefully.

"There, young man," said the painter.

"And this, young man, is another way, watch this," said Georges, imitating Schinner, but swallowing the smoke so that none returned.

"And my parents fancy that I am educated," thought poor Oscar, trying to smoke with a grace. But he felt so mortally sick that he allowed Mistigris to bone his cigar and to say, as he puffed at it with conspicuous satisfaction—

"I suppose you have nothing catching."

But Oscar wished he were only strong enough to hit Mistigris.

"Why," said he, pointing to Colonel Georges, "eight francs for Alicante and cheese-cakes, forty sous in cigars, and his breakfast, which will cost——"

"Ten francs at least," said Mistigris. "But so it is, little dishes make long bills."

"Well, Père Léger, we can crack a bottle of Bordeaux apiece?" said Georges to the farmer.

"His breakfast will cost him twenty francs," cried Oscar. "Why, that comes to more than thirty francs!"

Crushed by the sense of his inferiority, Oscar sat down on the curbstone lost in a reverie, which hindered his observing that his trousers, hitched up as he sat, showed the line of union between an old stocking-leg and a new foot to it, a masterpiece of his mother's skill.

"Our understandings are twins, if not our soles," said Mistigris, pulling one leg of his trousers a little way up to show a similiar effect. "But a baker's children are always worst bread."

The jest made Monsieur de Sérizy smile as he stood with folded arms under the gateway behind the two lads. Heedless as they were, the solemn statesman envied them their faults; he liked their bounce, and admired the quickness of their fun.

"Well, can you get les Moulineaux? for you went to Paris to fetch the money," said the innkeeper to old Léger, having just shown him a nag for sale in his stables. "It will be a fine joke to screw a bit out of the Comte de Sérizy, a peer of France and a State Minister."

The wily old courtier betrayed nothing in his face, but he looked round to watch the farmer.

"His goose is cooked!" replied Léger in a low voice.

"So much the better; I love to see your bigwigs done. And if you want a score or so thousand francs, I will lend you the money. But François, the driver of Touchards' six-o'clock coach, told me as he went through that Monsieur Margueron is invited to dine with the Comte de Sérizy himself to-day at Presles."

"That is his excellency's plan, but we have our little notions too," replied the farmer.

"Ah, but the count will find a place for Monsieur Margueron's son, and you have no places to give away," said the innkeeper.

"No; but if the count has the Ministers on his side, I have King Louis XVIII. on mine," said Léger in the innkeeper's ear, "and forty thousand of his effigies handed over to Master Moreau will enable me to buy les Moulineaux for two hundred and sixty thousand francs before Monsieur de Sérizy can step in, and he will be glad enough to take it off my hands for three hundred and sixty thousand rather than have the lands valued lot by lot."

"Not a bad turn, master," said his friend.

"How is that for a stroke of business?" said the farmer.

"And, after all, the farm lands are worth it to him," said the innkeeper.

"Les Moulineaux pays six thousand francs a year in kind, and I mean to renew the lease at seven thousand five hundred for eighteen years. So as he invests at more than two and a half per cent., Monsieur le Comte won't be robbed.

"Not to commit Monsieur Moreau, I am to be proposed to the count by him as a tenant; he will seem to be taking care of his master's interests by finding him nearly three per cent. for his money and a farmer who will pay regularly——"

"And what will Moreau get out of the job altogether?"

"Well, if the count makes him a present of ten thousand francs, he will clear fifty thousand on the transaction; but he will have earned them fairly."

"And, after all, what does the count care for Presles? He is so rich," said the innkeeper. "I have never set eyes on him myself."

"Nor I neither," said the farmer. "But he is coming at last to live there; he would not otherwise be laying out two hundred thousand francs on redecorating the rooms. It is as fine as the King's palace."

"Well, then," replied the other, "it is high time that Moreau should feather his nest."

"Yes, yes; for when once the master and mis'ess are on the spot, they will not keep their eyes in their pockets."

Though the conversation was carried on in a low tone, the count had kept his ears open.

"Here I have all the evidence I was going in search of," thought he, looking at the burly farmer as he went back into the kitchen. "But perhaps it is no more than a scheme as yet. Perhaps Moreau has not closed with the offer——!" So averse was he to believe that the land steward was capable of mixing himself up in such a plot.

Pierrotin now came out to give his horses water. The count supposed that the driver would breakfast with the innkeeper and Léger, and what he had overheard made him fear the least betrayal.

"The whole posse are in league," thought he; "it serves them right to thwart their scheming. Pierrotin," said he in a low voice as he went up to the driver, "I promised you ten louis to keep my secret; but if you will take care not to let

out my name—and I shall know whether you have mentioned it, or given the least clue to it, to any living soul, even at l'Isle-Adam—to-morrow morning, as you pass the castle, I will give you the thousand francs to pay for your new coach. And for greater safety," added he, slapping Pierrotin's back, "do without your breakfast; stay outside with your horses."

Pierrotin had turned pale with joy.

"I understand, Monsieur le Comte, trust me. It is old Père Léger——"

"It concerns every living soul," replied the count.

"Be easy. Come, hurry up," said Pierrotin, half opening the kitchen door, "we are late already. Listen, Père Léger, there is the hill before us, you know; I am not hungry; I will go on slowly, and you will easily catch me up. A walk will do you good."

"The man is in a devil of a hurry!" said the innkeeper. "Won't you come and join us? The colonel is standing wine at fifty sous, and a bottle of champagne."

"No, I can't. I have a fish on board to be delivered at Stors by three o'clock for a big dinner; and such customers don't see a joke any more than the fish."

"All right," said Léger to the innkeeper; "put the horse you want me to buy in the shafts of your gig, and you can drive us on to pick up Pierrotin. Then we can breakfast in peace, and I shall see what the nag can do. Three of us can very well ride in your old jolter."

To the count's great satisfaction, Pierrotin himself brought out his horses. Schinner and Mistigris had walked forward.

Pierrotin picked up the two artists half-way between Saint-Brice and Poncelles; and just as he reached the top of the hill, whence they had a view of Écouen, the belfry of le Mesnil, and the woods which encircle that beautiful landscape, the sound of a galloping horse drawing a gig that rattled and jingled announced the pursuit of Père Léger and Mina's colonel, who settled themselves into the chaise again.

As Pierrotin zigzagged down the hill into Moisselles, Georges, who had never ceased expatiating to old Léger on the beauty of the innkeeper's wife at Saint-Brice, exclaimed—

"I say, this is not amiss by way of landscape, Great Painter?"

"It ought not to astonish you, who have seen Spain and the East."

"And I have two of the Spanish cigars left. If nobody objects, will you help me finish them off, Schinner? The little man had enough with a mouthful or two."

Old Léger and the count kept silence, which was taken for consent.

Oscar, annoyed at being spoken of as "a little man," retorted while the others were lighting their cigars—

"Though I have not been Mina's aide-de-camp, monsieur, and have not been in the East, I may go there yet. The career for which my parents intend me will, I hope, relieve me of the necessity of riding in a public chaise when I am as old as you are. When once I am a person of importance, and get a place, I will stay in it——"

"And the rest, certainly!" said Mistigris, imitating the sort of hoarse crow which made Oscar's speech even more ridiculous; for the poor boy was at the age when the beard begins to grow and the voice to break. "After all," added Mistigris, "extremes bleat."

"My word," said Schinner, "the horses can scarcely draw such a weight of dignity."

"So your parents intend to start you in a career," said Georges very seriously. "And what may it be?"

"In diplomacy," said Oscar.

Three shouts of laughter went forth like three rockets from Mistigris, Schinner, and the old farmer. Even the count could not help smiling. Georges kept his countenance.

"By Allah! But there is nothing to laugh at," said the colonel. "Only, young man," he went on, addressing Oscar,

"it struck me that your respectable mother is not for the moment in a social position wholly beseeming an ambassadress. She had a most venerable straw bag, and a patch on her shoe."

"My mother, monsieur!" said Oscar, fuming with indignation. "It was our housekeeper."

"'*Our*' is most aristocratic!" cried the count, interrupting Oscar.

"The king says *our*," replied Oscar haughtily.

A look from Georges checked a general burst of laughter; it conveyed to the painter and to Mistigris the desirability of dealing judiciously with Oscar, so as to make the most of this mine of amusement.

"The gentleman is right," said the painter to the count, designating Oscar. "Gentlefolk talk of *our* house; only second-rate people talk of my house. Everybody has a mania for seeming to have what he has not. For a man loaded with decorations——"

"Then, monsieur also is a decorator?" asked Mistigris.

"You know nothing of court language. I beg the favor of your protection, your excellency," added Schinner, turning to Oscar.

"I must congratulate myself," said the count, "on having traveled with three men who are or will be famous—a painter who is already illustrious, a future general, and a young diplomatist who will some day reunite Belgium to France."

But Oscar, having so basely denied his mother, and furious at perceiving that his companions were making game of him, determined to convince their incredulity at any cost.

"All is not gold that glitters!" said he, flashing lightnings from his eyes.

"You've got it wrong," cried Mistigris. "All is not old that titters. You will not go far in diplomacy if you do not know your proverbs better than that."

"If I do not know my proverbs, I know my way."

"It must be leading you a long way," said Georges, "for your family housekeeper gave you provisions enough for a sea voyage—biscuits, chocolate——"

"A particular roll and some chocolate, yes, monsieur," returned Oscar. "My stomach is much too delicate to digest the cagmag you get at an inn."

"'Cagmag' is as delicate as your digestion," retorted Georges.

"'Cagmag' is good!" said the great painter.

"The word is in use in the best circles," said Mistigris; "I use it myself at the coffee-house of the Poule Noire" (black hen).

"Your tutor was, no doubt, some famous professor—Monsieur Andrieux of the Academy or Monsieur Royer-Collard?" asked Schinner.

"My tutor was the Abbé Loraux, now the Vicar of St. Sulpice," replied Oscar, remembering the name of the confessor of the school.

"You did very wisely to have a private tutor," said Mistigris, "for the fountain—of learning—brought forth a mouse; and you will do something for your abbé, of course?"

"Certainly; he will be a bishop some day."

"And through your family interest?" asked Georges quite gravely.

"We may perhaps contribute to his due promotion, for the Abbé Frayssinous often comes to our house."

"Oh, do you know the Abbé Frayssinous?" asked the count.

"He is under obligations to my father," replied the furious Oscar.

"And you are on your way to your estate, no doubt?" said Georges.

"No, monsieur; but I have no objection to saying where I am going. I am on my way to the mansion of Presles, the Comte de Sérizy's."

"The devil you are! To Presles?" cried Schinner, turning crimson.

"Then do you know Monseigneur the Comte de Sérizy?" asked Georges.

Farmer Léger turned so as to look at Oscar with a bewildered gaze, exclaiming—

"And Monsieur le Comte is at Presles?"

"So it would seem, as I am going there," replied Oscar.

"Then you have often seen the count?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

"As plainly as I see you. I am great friends with his son, who is about my age, nineteen; and we ride together almost every day."

"Kings have been known to harry beggar-maids," said Mistigris sapiently.

A wink from Pierrotin had relieved the farmer's alarm.

"On my honor," said the count to Oscar, "I am delighted to find myself in the company of a young gentleman who can speak with authority of that nobleman. I am anxious to secure his favor in a somewhat important business in which his help will cost him nothing. It is a little claim against the American Government. I should be glad to learn something as to the sort of man he is."

"Oh, if you hope to succeed," replied Oscar, with an assumption of competence, "do not apply to him, but to his wife; he is madly in love with her, no one knows that better than I, and his wife cannot endure him."

"Why?" asked Georges.

"The count has some skin disease that makes him hideous, and Doctor Alibert has tried in vain to cure it. Monsieur de Sérizy would give half of his immense fortune to have a chest like mine," said Oscar, opening his shirt and showing a clean pink skin like a child's. "He lives alone, secluded in his house. You need a good introduction to see him at all. In the first place, he gets up very early in the morning, and works

from three till eight, after eight he follows various treatments, sulphur baths or vapor baths. They stew him in a sort of iron tank, for he is always hoping to be cured."

"If he is so intimate with the King, why is he not 'touched' by him?" asked Georges.

"Then the lady keeps her husband in hot water," said Mistigris.

"The count has promised thirty thousand francs to a famous Scotch physician who is prescribing for him now," Oscar went on.

"Then his wife can hardly be blamed for giving herself the best——" Schinner began, but he did not finish his sentence.

"To be sure," said Oscar. "The poor man is so shriveled, so decrepit, you would think he was eighty. He is as dry as parchment, and, to add to his misfortune, he feels his position——"

"And feels it hot, I should think," remarked the farmer facetiously.

"Monsieur, he worships his wife, and dares not blame her," replied Oscar. "He performs the most ridiculous scenes with her, you would die of laughing—exactly like Arnolphe in Molière's play."

The count, in blank dismay, looked at Pierrotin, who, seeing him apparently unmoved, concluded that Madame Clapart's son was inventing a pack of slander.

"So, monsieur, if you wish to succeed," said Oscar to the count, "apply to the Marquis d'Aiglemont. If you have madame's former adorer on your side, you will at one stroke secure both the lady and her husband."

"That is what we call killing two-thirds with one bone," said Mistigris.

"Dear me!" said the painter, "have you seen the count undressed? Are you his valet?"

"His valet!" cried Oscar.

"By the mass! A man does not say such things about his

friends in a public conveyance," added Mistigris. "Discretion, my young friend, is the mother of inattention. I simply don't hear you."

"It is certainly a case of tell me whom you know, and I will tell you whom you hate," exclaimed Schinner.

"But you must learn, Great Painter," said Georges pompously, "that no man can speak ill of those he does not know. The boy has proved at any rate that he knows his Sérizy by heart. Now, if he had only talked of madame, it might have been supposed that he was on terms——"

"Not another word about the Comtesse de Sérizy, young men!" cried the count. "Her brother, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, is a friend of mine, and the man who is so rash as to cast a doubt on the countess' honor will answer to me for his speech."

"Monsieur is right," said the artist, "there should be no scandal spoken about women."

"*God, Honor, and the Ladies!* I saw a melodrama of that name," said Mistigris.

"Though I do not know Mina, I know the keeper of the seals," said the count, looking at Georges. "And though I do not display my orders," he added, turning to the painter, "I can hinder their being given to those who do not deserve them. In short, I know so many people, that I know Monsieur Grindot, the architect of Presles. Stop at the next inn, Pierrotin; I am going to get out."

Pierrotin drove on to the village of Moisselles, and there, at a little country inn, the travelers alighted. This bit of road was passed in utter silence.

"Where on earth is that little rascal going?" asked the count, leading Pierrotin into the inn-yard.

"To stay with your steward. He is the son of a poor lady who lives in the Rue de la Cerisaie, and to whom I often carry fruit and game and poultry—a certain Madame Husson."

"Who is that gentleman?" old Léger asked Pierrotin when the count had turned away.

"I don't know," said Pierrotin. "He never rode with me before; but he may be the prince who owns the castle of Maffliers. He has just told me where to set him down on the road; he is not going so far as l'Isle-Adam."

"Pierrotin fancies he is the owner of Maffliers," said the farmer to Georges, getting back into the chaise.

At this stage the three young fellows, looking as silly as pilferers caught in the act, did not dare meet each other's eye, and seemed lost in reflections on the upshot of their several fictions.

"That is what I call a great lie and little wool," observed Mistigris.

"You see, I know the count," said Oscar.

"Possibly, but you will never be an ambassador," replied Georges. "If you must talk in a public carriage, learn to talk like me and tell nothing."

"The mother of mischief is no more than a midge's sting," said Mistigris conclusively.

The count now got into the chaise, and Pierrotin drove on; perfect silence reigned.

"Well, my good friends," said the count, as they reached the wood of Carreau, "we are all as mute as if we were going to execution."

"Silence gives content. A man should know that silence is a bold 'un," said Mistigris with an air.

"It is a fine day," remarked Georges.

"What place is that?" asked Oscar, pointing to the castle of Franconville, which shows so finely on the slope of the great forest of Saint-Martin.

"What!" said the count, "you who have been so often to Presles, do not know Franconville when you see it?"

"Monsieur knows more of men than of houses," said Mistigris.

"A sucking diplomatist may sometimes be oblivious," exclaimed Georges.

"Remember my name!" cried Oscar in a fury, "it is Oscar Husson, and in ten years' time I shall be famous."

After this speech, pronounced with great bravado, Oscar huddled himself into his corner.

"Husson de—what?" asked Mistigris.

"A great family," replied the count. "The Hussons de la Cerisaie. The gentleman was born at the foot of the Imperial throne."

Oscar blushed to the roots of his hair in an agony of alarm. They were about to descend the steep hill by la Cave, at the bottom of which, in a narrow valley, on the skirt of the forest of Saint-Martin, stands the splendid castle of Presles.

"Gentlemen," said Monsieur de Sérizy, "I wish you well in your several careers. You, Monsieur le Colonel, make your peace with the King of France; the Czerni-Georges must be on good terms with the Bourbons. I have no forecast for you, my dear Monsieur Schinner; your fame is already made, and you have won it nobly by splendid work. But you are such a dangerous man that I, who have a wife, should not dare to offer you a commission under my roof. As to Monsieur Husson, he needs no interest; he is the master of statesmen's secrets, and can make them tremble. Monsieur Léger is going to steal a march on the Comte de Sérizy; I only hope that he may hold his own. Put me down here, Pierrotin, and you can take me up at the same spot to-morrow!" added the count, who got out, leaving his fellow-travelers quite confounded.

"When you take to your heels you can't take too much," remarked Mistigris, seeing how nimbly the traveler vanished in a sunken path.

"Oh, he must be the count who has taken Franconville; he is going that way," said Père Léger.

"If ever again I try to humbug in a public carriage I will

call myself out," said the false Schinner. "It is partly your fault too, Mistigris," said he, giving his boy a rap on his cap.

"Oh, ho! I—who only followed you to Venice," replied Mistigris. "But play a dog a bad game and slang him."

"Do you know," said Georges to Oscar, "that if by any chance that was the Comte de Sérizy, I should be sorry to find myself in your skin, although it is so free from disease."

Oscar, reminded by these words of his mother's advice, turned pale, and was quite sobered.

"Here you are, gentlemen," said Pierrotin, pulling up at a handsome gate.

"Are where?" exclaimed the painter, Georges, and Oscar all in a breath.

"That's a stiff one!" cried Pierrotin. "Do you mean to say, gentlemen, that neither of you has ever been here before? There stands the castle of Presles!"

"All right," said Georges, recovering himself. "I am going on to the farm of les Moulineaux," he added, not choosing to tell his fellow-travelers that he was bound for the house.

"Then you are coming with me," said Léger.

"How is that?"

"I am the farmer at les Moulineaux. And what do you want of me, colonel?"

"A taste of your butter," said Georges, pulling out his portfolio.

"Pierrotin, drop my things at the steward's," said Oscar; "I am going straight to the house." And he plunged into a cross-path without knowing whither it led.

"Halloo! Mr. Ambassador," cried Pierrotin, "you are going into the forest. If you want to get to the castle, go in by the side-gate."

Thus compelled to go in, Oscar made his way into the spacious courtyard with a huge stone-edged flower-bed in the middle, and stone posts all round with chains between. While

Père Léger stood watching Oscar, Georges, thunderstruck at hearing the burly farmer describe himself as the owner of les Moulineaux, vanished so nimbly that, when the fat man looked round for his colonel, he could not find him.

At Pierrotin's request the gate was opened, and he went in with much dignity to deposit the Great Schinner's multifarious properties at the lodge. Oscar was in dismay at seeing Mistigris and the artist, the witnesses of his brag, really admitted to the castle.

In ten minutes Pierrotin had unloaded the chaise of the painter's paraphernalia, Oscar Husson's luggage, and the neat leather portmanteau, which he mysteriously confided to the lodge-keeper. Then he turned his machine, cracking his whip energetically, and went on his way to the woods of l'Isle Adam, his face still wearing the artful expression of a peasant summing up his profits.

Nothing was wanting to his satisfaction. On the morrow he would have his thousand francs.

Oscar, with his tail between his legs, so to speak, wandered round the great court, waiting to see what would become of his traveling companions, when he presently saw Monsieur Moreau come out of the large entrance-hall known as the guardroom, on to the front steps. The land steward, who wore a long, blue riding-coat cut down to his heels, had on nankin-colored breeches and hunting-boots, and carried a crop in his hand.

"Well, my boy, so here you are? And how is the dear mother?" said he, shaking hands with Oscar. "Good-morning, gentlemen; you, no doubt, are the painters promised us by Monsieur Grindot, the architect?" said he to the artists.

He whistled twice, using the end of his riding-whip, and the lodge-keeper came forward.

"Take these gentlemen to their rooms—Nos. 14 and 15; Madame Moreau will give you the keys. Light fires this

evening, if necessary, and carry up their things. I am instructed by Monsieur le Comte to ask you to dine with me," he added, addressing the artists. "At five, as in Paris. If you are sportsmen, you can be well amused. I have permission to shoot and fish, and we have twelve thousand acres of shooting outside our own grounds."

Oscar, the painter, and Mistigris, one as much disconcerted as the other, exchanged glances. Still, Mistigris, faithful to his instincts, exclaimed—

"Pooh, never throw the candle after the shade!* On we go!"

Little Husson followed the steward, who led the way, walking quickly across the park.

"Jacques," said he to one of his sons, "go and tell your mother that young Husson has arrived, and say that I am obliged to go over to les Moulineaux for a few minutes."

Moreau, now about fifty years of age, a dark man of medium height, had a stern expression. His bilious complexion, highly colored nevertheless by a country life, suggested, at first sight, a character very unlike what his really was. Everything contributed to the illusion. His hair was turning gray, his blue eyes and a large aquiline nose gave him a sinister expression, all the more so because his eyes were too close together; still, his full lips, the shape of his face, and the good-humor of his address, would, to a keen observer, have been indications of kindliness. His very decided manner and abrupt way of speech impressed Oscar immensely with a sense of his penetration, arising from his real affection for the boy. Brought up by his mother to look up to the steward as a great man, Oscar always felt small in Moreau's presence; and now, finding himself at Presles, he felt an oppressive uneasiness, as if he had some ill to fear from this fatherly friend, who was his only protector.

"Why, my dear Oscar, you do not look glad to be here,"

* In original: *Veni, vidi cecidi.*

said the steward. "But you will have plenty to amuse you; you can learn to ride, to shoot, and hunt."

"I know nothing of such things," said Oscar dully.

"But I have asked you here on purpose to teach you."

"Mamma told me not to stay more than a fortnight, because Madame Moreau——"

"Oh, well, we shall see," replied Moreau, almost offended by Oscar's doubts of his conjugal influence.

Moreau's youngest son, a lad of fifteen, active and brisk, now came running up.

"Here," said his father, "take your new companion to your mother."

And the steward himself went off by the shortest path to a keeper's hut between the park and the wood.

The handsome lodge, given by the count as his land steward's residence, had been built some years before the Revolution, by the owner of the famous estate of Cassan or Bergeret, a farmer-general of enormous wealth, who made himself as notorious for extravagance as Bodard, Pâris, and Bouret, laying out gardens, diverting rivers, building hermitages, Chinese temples, and other costly magnificence.

This house, in the middle of a large garden, of which one wall divided it from the outbuildings of Presles, had formerly had its entrance on the village High Street. Monsieur de Sérizy's father, when he purchased the property, had only to pull down the dividing wall and build up the front gate to make this plot and house part of the outbuildings. Then, by pulling down another wall, he added to his park all the garden land that the former owner had purchased to complete his ring-fence.

The lodge, built of freestone, was in the Louis XV. style, with linen-pattern panels under the windows, like those on the colonnades of the Place Louis XV., in stiff, angular folds; it consisted, on the first floor, of a fine drawing-room opening into a bedroom, and of a dining-room, with a billiard-room

adjoining. These two suites, parallel to each other, were divided by a sort of anteroom or hall, and the stairs. The hall was decorated by the doors of the drawing-room and dining-room, both handsomely ornamental. The kitchen was under the dining-room, for there was a flight of ten outside steps.

Madame Moreau had taken the second floor for her own, and had transformed what had been the best bedroom into a boudoir; this boudoir, and the drawing-room below, handsomely fitted up with the best pickings of the old furniture from the castle, would certainly have done no discredit to the mansion of a lady of fashion. The drawing-room, hung with blue-and-white damask, the spoils of a state bed, and with old gilded-wood furniture upholstered with the same silk, displayed ample curtains to the doors and windows. Some pictures that had formerly been panels, with flower-stands, a few modern tables, and handsome lamps, beside an antique hanging chandelier of cut-glass, gave the room a very dignified effect. The carpet was old Persian.

The boudoir was altogether modern and fitted to Madame Moreau's taste, in imitation of a tent, with blue silk ropes on a light gray ground. There was the usual divan with pillows and cushions for the feet, and the flower-stands, carefully cherished by the head-gardener, were a joy to the eye with their pyramids of flowers.

The dining-room and billiard-room were fitted with mahogany. All round the house the steward's lady had planned a flower-garden, beautifully kept, and beyond it lay the park. Clumps of foreign shrubs shut out the stables, and to give admission from the road to her visitors she had opened a gate where the old entrance had been built up.

Thus, the dependent position filled by the Moreaus was cleverly glossed over; and they were the better able to figure as rich folk managing a friend's estate for their pleasure, because neither the count nor the countess ever came to quash

their pretensions; and the liberality of Monsieur de Sérizy's concessions allowed of their living in abundance, the luxury of country homes. Dairy produce, eggs, poultry, game, fruit, forage, flowers, wood, and vegetables—the steward and his wife had all of these in profusion, and bought literally nothing but butcher's meat and the wine and foreign produce necessary to their lordly extravagance. The poultry-wife made the bread; and, in fact, for the last few years, Moreau had paid his butcher's bill with the pigs of the farm, keeping only as much pork as he needed.

One day the countess, always very generous to her former lady's-maid, made Madame Moreau a present, as a souvenir perhaps, of a little traveling chaise of a past fashion, which Moreau had furbished up, and in which his wife drove out behind a pair of good horses, useful at other times in the grounds. Beside this pair, the steward had his saddle-horse. He ploughed part of the park-land, and raised grain enough to feed the beasts and servants; he cut three hundred tons more or less of good hay, accounting for no more than one hundred, encroaching on the license vaguely granted by the count; and instead of using his share of the produce on the premises, he sold it. He kept his poultry-farm, his pigeons, and his cows on the crops from the park-land; but then the manure from his stables was used in the count's garden. Each of these pilfering acts had an excuse ready.

Madame Moreau's house-servant was the daughter of one of the gardeners, and waited on her and cooked; she was helped in the housework by a girl, who also attended to the poultry and dairy. Moreau had engaged an invalided soldier named Brochon to look after the horses and do the dirty work.

At Nerville, at Chauvry, at Beaumont, at Maffliers, at Préroles, at Nointel, the steward's pretty wife was everywhere received by persons who did not, or affected not to, know her original position in life. And Moreau could confer obligations. He could use his master's interest in matters which are

of immense importance in the depths of the country though trivial in Paris. After securing for friends the appointments of justice of the peace at Beaumont and at l'Isle-Adam, he had, in the course of the same year, saved an inspector of forest-lands from dismissal, and obtained the cross of the Legion of Honor for the quartermaster at Beaumont. So there was never a festivity among the more respectable neighbors without Monsieur and Madame Moreau being invited. The curé and the Mayor of Presles were to be seen every evening at their house. A man can hardly help being a good fellow when he has made himself so comfortable.

So Madame la Régisseuse—a pretty woman, and full of airs, like every grand lady's servant who, when she marries, apes her mistress—introduced the latest fashions, wore the most expensive shoes, and never walked out but in fine weather. Though her husband gave her no more than five hundred francs a year for dress, this in the country is a very large sum, especially when judiciously spent; and his "lady," fair, bright, and fresh-looking, at the age of thirty-six, and remaining slight, neat, and attractive in spite of her three children, still played the girl, and gave herself the airs of a princess. If, as she drove past in her open chaise on her way to Beaumont, some stranger happened to inquire, "Who is that?" Madame Moreau was furious if a native of the place replied, "She is the steward's wife at Presles." She aimed at being taken for the mistress of the mansion.

She amused herself with patronizing the villagers, as a great lady might have done. Her husband's power with the count, proved in so many ways, hindered the townsfolk from laughing at Madame Moreau, who was a person of importance in the eyes of the peasantry.

Estelle, however—her name was Estelle—did not interfere in the management, any more than a stockbroker's wife interferes in dealings on the Bourse; she even relied on her husband for the administration of the house and of their income.

Quite confident in her own powers of pleasing, she was miles away from imagining that this delightful life, which had gone on for seventeen years, could ever be in danger; however, on hearing that the count had resolved on restoring the splendid castle of Presles, she understood that all her enjoyments were imperiled, and she had persuaded her husband to come to terms with Léger, so as to have a retreat at l'Isle-Adam. She could not have borne to find herself in an almost servile position in the presence of her former mistress, who would undoubtedly laugh at her on finding her established at the lodge in a style that aped the lady of fashion.

The origin of the deep-seated enmity between the Reyberts and the Moreaus lay in a stab inflicted on Madame Moreau by Madame de Reybert in revenge for a pin-prick that the steward's wife had dared to give on the first arrival of the Reyberts, lest her supremacy should be infringed on by the lady *née* de Corroy. Madame de Reybert had mentioned, and perhaps for the first time informed the neighborhood, of Madame Moreau's original calling. The words *lady's-maid* flew from lip to lip. All those who envied the Moreaus—and they must have been many—at Beaumont, at l'Isle-Adam, at Maffliers, at Champagne, at Nerville, at Chauvry, at Baillet, at Moisselles, made such pregnant comments that more than one spark from this conflagration fell into the Moreaus' home. For four years, now, the Reyberts, excommunicated by their pretty rival, had become the object of so much hostile animadversion from her partisans that their position would have been untenable but for the thought of vengeance which had sustained them to this day.

The Moreaus, who were very good friends with Grindot the architect, had been told by him of the arrival ere long of a painter commissioned to finish the decorative panels at the castle, Schinner having executed the more important pieces. This great painter recommended the artist we have seen

traveling with Mistigris, to paint the borders, arabesques, and other accessory decorations. Hence, for two days past, Madame Moreau had been preparing her war-paint and sitting expectant. An artist who was to board with her for some weeks was worthy of some outlay. Schinner and his wife had been quartered in the castle, where, by the count's orders, they had been entertained like my lord himself. Grindot, who boarded with the Moreaus, had treated the great artist with so much respect that neither the steward nor his wife had ventured on any familiarity. And, indeed, the richest and most noble landowners in the district had vied with each other in entertaining Schinner and his wife. So now Madame Moreau, much pleased at the prospect of turning the tables, promised herself that she would sound the trumpet before the artist who was to be her guest, and make him out a match in talent for Schinner.

Although on the two previous days she had achieved very coquettish toilets, the steward's pretty wife had husbanded her resources too well not to have reserved the most bewitching till the Saturday, never doubting that on that day at any rate the artist would arrive to dinner. She had shod herself in bronze kid with fine thread stockings. A dress of finely striped pink-and-white muslin, a pink belt with a chased gold buckle, a cross and heart round her neck, and wristlets of black velvet on her bare arms—Madame de Sérizy had fine arms, and was fond of displaying them—gave Madame Moreau the style of a fashionable Parisian. She put on a very handsome Leghorn hat, graced with a bunch of moss roses made by Nattier, and under its broad shade her fair hair flowed in glossy curls.

Having ordered a first-rate dinner and carefully inspected the rooms, she went out at an hour which brought her to the large flower-bed in the court of the castle, like the lady of the house, just when the coach would pass. Over her head she held a very elegant pink silk parasol lined with white and

trimmed with fringe. On seeing Pierrotin hand over to the lodge-keeper the artist's extraordinary-looking baggage, and perceiving no owner, Estelle had returned home lamenting the waste of another carefully arranged toilet. And, like most people who have dressed for an occasion, she felt quite incapable of any occupation but that of doing nothing in her drawing-room while waiting for the passing of the Beaumont coach which should come through an hour after Pierrotin's, though it did not start from Paris till one o'clock; thus she was waiting at home while the two young artists were dressing for dinner. In fact, the young painter and Mistigris were so overcome by the description of lovely Madame Moreau given them by the gardener whom they had questioned, that it was obvious to them both that they must get themselves into their best "toggery." So they donned their very best before presenting themselves at the steward's house, whither they were conducted by Jacques Moreau, the eldest of the children, a stalwart youth, dressed in the English fashion, in a round jacket with a turned-down collar, and as happy during the holidays as a fish in water, here on the estate where his mother reigned supreme.

"Mamma," said he, "here are the two artists come from Monsieur Schinner."

Madame Moreau, very agreeably surprised, rose, bid her son set chairs, and displayed all her graces.

"Mamma, little Husson is with father; shall I fetch him?" whispered the boy in her ear.

"There is no hurry, you can stop and amuse him," said the mother.

The mere words "there is no hurry" showed the two artists how entirely unimportant was their traveling companion, but the tone also betrayed the indifference of a stepmother for her stepchild. In fact, Madame Moreau, who, after seventeen years of married life, could not fail to be aware of her husband's attachment to Madame Clapart and young

Husson, hated the mother and son in so overt a manner that it is easy to understand why Moreau had never till now ventured to invite Oscar to Presles.

"We are requested, my husband and I," said she to the two artists, "to do the honors of the castle. We are fond of art, and more especially of artists," said she, with a simper, "and I beg you to consider yourselves quite at home here. In the country, you see, there is no ceremony; liberty is indispensable, otherwise life is too insipid. We have had Monsieur Schinner here already——"

Mistigris gave his companion a mischievous wink.

"You know him, of course," said Estelle, after a pause.

"Who does not know him, madame?" replied the painter.

"He is as well known as the parish birch," added Mistigris.

"Monsieur Grindot mentioned your name," said Madame Moreau, "but really I——"

"Joseph Bridau, madame," replied the artist, extremely puzzled as to what this woman could be.

Mistigris was beginning to fume inwardly at this fair lady's patronizing tone; still, he waited, as Bridau did too, for some movement, some chance word to enlighten them, one of those expressions of assumed fine-ladyism, which painters, those born and cruel observers of folly—the perennial food of their pencil—seize on in an instant. In the first place, Estelle's large hands and feet, those of a peasant from the district of Saint-Lô, struck them at once; and before long one or two lady's-maid's phrases, modes of speech that gave the lie to the elegance of her dress, betrayed their prey into the hands of the artist and his apprentice. They exchanged a look which pledged them both to take Estelle quite seriously as a pastime during their stay.

"You are so fond of art, perhaps you cultivate it with success, madame?" said Joseph Bridau.

"No. Though my education was not neglected, it was purely commercial. But I have such a marked and delicate

feeling for art, that Monsieur Schinner always begged me, when he had finished a piece, to give him my opinion."

"Just as Molière consulted La Forêt," said Mistigris.

Not knowing that La Forêt was a servant-girl, Madame Moreau responded with a graceful droop, showing that in her ignorance she regarded this speech as a compliment.

"How is it that he did not propose just to knock off your head?" said Bridau. "Painters are generally on the lookout for handsome women."

"What is your meaning, pray?" said Madame Moreau, on whose face dawned the wrath of an offended queen.

"In studio slang, to knock a thing off is to sketch it," said Mistigris, in an ingratiating tone, "and all we ask is to have handsome heads to sketch. And we sometimes say in admiration that a woman's beauty has knocked us over."

"Ah, I did not know the origin of the phrase!" replied she, with a look of languishing sweetness at Mistigris.

"My pupil, Monsieur Léon de Lora," said Bridau, "has a great talent for likeness. He would be only too happy, fair being, to leave you a souvenir of his skill by painting your charming face."

And Bridau signaled to Mistigris, as much as to say, "Come, drive it home, she really is not amiss!"

Taking this hint, Léon de Lora moved to the sofa by Estelle's side, and took her hand, which she left in his.

"Oh! if only as a surprise to your husband, madame, you could give me a few sittings in secret, I would try to excel myself. You are so lovely, so young, so charming! A man devoid of talent might become a genius with you for his model! In your eyes he would find——"

"And we would represent your sweet children in our arabesques," said Joseph, interrupting Mistigris.

"I would rather have them in my own drawing-room; but that would be asking too much," said she, looking coquettishly at Bridau.

"Beauty, madame, is a queen whom painters worship, and who has every right to command them."

"They are quite charming," thought Madame Moreau. "Do you like driving out in the evening, after dinner, in an open carriage, in the woods?"

"Oh! oh! oh! oh!" cried Mistigris, in ecstatic tones at each added detail. "Why, Presles, will be an earthly paradise."

"With a fair-haired Eve, a young and bewitching woman," added Bridau.

Just as Madame Moreau was preening herself, and soaring into the seventh heaven, she was brought down again like a kite by a tug at the cord.

"Madame!" exclaimed the maid, bouncing in like a cannon ball.

"Bless me, Rosalie, what can justify you in coming in like this without being called?"

Rosalie did not trouble her head about this apostrophe, but said in her mistress' ear—

"Monsieur le Comte is here."

"Did he ask for me?" said the steward's wife.

"No, madame—but—he wants his portmanteau and the key of his room."

"Let him have them then," said she, with a cross shrug to disguise her uneasiness.

"Mamma, here is Oscar Husson!" cried her youngest son, bringing in Oscar, who, as red as a poppy, dared not come forward as he saw the two painters in different dress.

"So here you are at last, boy," said Estelle coldly. "You are going to dress, I hope?" she went on, after looking at him from head to foot with great contempt. "I suppose your mother has not brought you up to dine in company in such clothes as those."

"Oh, no," said the ruthless Mistigris, "a coming diplomatist must surely have a seat—to his trousers! A coat to dine saves wine."

"A coming diplomatist?" cried Madame Moreau.

The tears rose to poor Oscar's eyes as he looked from Joseph to Léon.

"Only a jest by the way," replied Joseph, who wished to help Oscar in his straits.

"The boy wanted to make fun as we did and he tried to humbug," said the merciless Mistigris. "And now he finds himself the ass with a lion's grin."

"Madame," said Rosalie, coming back to the drawing-room door, "his excellency has ordered dinner for eight persons at six o'clock; what is to be done?"

While Estelle and her maid were holding counsel, the artists and Oscar gazed at each other, their eyes big with terrible apprehensions.

"His excellency—Who?" said Joseph Bridau.

"Why, Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy," replied little Moreau.

"Was it he, by chance, in the coucou?" said Léon de Lora.

"Oh!" exclaimed Oscar, "the Comte de Sérizy would surely never travel but in a coach and four."

"How did he come, madame—the Comte de Sérizy?" the painter asked of Madame Moreau when she came back very much upset.

"I have no idea," said she. "I cannot account for his coming, nor guess what he has come for. And Moreau is out!"

"His excellency begs you will go over to the castle, Monsieur Schinner," said the gardener, coming to the door, "and he begs you will give him the pleasure of your company at dinner, as well as Monsieur Mistigris."

"Our goose is cooked!" said the lad with a laugh. "The man we took for a country worthy in Pierrotin's chaise was the count. So true is it that what you seek you never bind," he added.

Oscar was almost turning to a pillar of salt; for, on hearing this, his throat felt as salt as the sea.

"And you! Who told him all about his wife's adorers and his skin disease?" said Mistigris to Oscar.

"What do you mean?" cried the steward's wife, looking at the two artists, who went off laughing at Oscar's face.

Oscar stood speechless, thunderstruck; hearing nothing, though Madame Moreau was questioning him and shaking him violently by one of his arms, which she had seized and clutched tightly; but she was obliged to leave him where he was without having extracted a reply, for Rosalie called her again to give out linen and plate, and to request her to attend in person to the numerous orders given by the count. The house-servants, the gardeners, everybody on the place, were rushing to and fro in such confusion as may be imagined.

The master had in fact dropped on the household like a shell from a mortar. From above la Cave the count had made his way by a path, familiar to him, to the gamekeeper's hut, and reached it before Moreau. The gamekeeper was amazed to see his real master.

"Is Moreau here, I see his horse waiting?" asked Monsieur de Sérizy.

"No, monseigneur; but as he is going over to les Moulineaux before dinner, he left his horse here while he ran across to give some orders at the house."

The gamekeeper had no idea of the effect of this reply, which, under existing circumstances, was, in the eyes of a clear-sighted man, tantamount to assurance.

"If you value your place," said the count to the keeper, "ride as fast as you can pelt to Beaumont on this horse, and deliver to Monsieur Margueron a note I will give you."

The count went into the man's lodge, wrote a line, folded it in such a manner that it could not be opened without detection, and gave it to the man as soon as he was in the saddle.

"Not a word to any living soul," said he. "And you, madame," he added to the keeper's wife, "if Moreau is surprised at not finding his horse here, tell him merely that I took it."

And the count went off across the park, through the gate which was opened for him at his nod.

Inured though a man may be to the turmoil of political life, with its excitement and vicissitudes, the soul of a man who, at the count's age, is still firm enough to love, is also young enough to feel a betrayal. It was so hard to believe that Moreau was deceiving him, that at Saint-Brice Monsieur de Sérizy had supposed him to be not so much in league with Léger and the notary as, in fact, led away by them. And so, standing in the inn gateway, as he heard Père Léger talking to the innkeeper, he intended to forgive his land steward after a severe reproof.

And then, strange to say, the dishonesty of his trusted agent had seemed no more than an episode when Oscar had blurted out the noble infirmities of the intrepid traveler, the Minister of Napoleon. Secrets so strictly kept could only have been revealed by Moreau, who had no doubt spoken contemptuously of his benefactor to Madame de Sérizy's former maid, or to the erstwhile Aspasia of the Directoire.

As he made his way down the cross-road to the castle, the peer of France, the great minister, had shed bitter tears, weeping as a boy weeps. They were his last tears that he shed! Every human feeling at once was so cruelly, so mercilessly attacked, that this self-controlled man rushed on across his park like a hunted animal.

When Moreau asked for his horse, and the keeper's wife replied—

"Monsieur le Comte has just taken it."

"Who—Monsieur le Comte?" cried he.

"Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy, the master," said she. "Perhaps he is at the castle," added she, to get rid of the

steward, who, quite bewildered by this occurrence, went off toward the house.

But he presently returned to question the keeper's wife, for it had struck him that there was some serious motive for his master's secret arrival and unwonted conduct. The woman, terrified at finding herself in a vise, as it were, between the count and the steward, had shut herself into her lodge, quite determined only to open the door to her husband. Moreau, more and more uneasy, hurried across to the gatekeeper's lodge, where he was told that the count was dressing. Rosalie, whom he met, announced: "Seven people to dine at the count's table."

Moreau next went home, where he found the poultry-girl in hot discussion with an odd-looking young man.

"Monsieur le Comte told us, 'Mina's aide-de-camp and a colonel,'" the girl insisted.

"I am not a colonel," replied Georges.

"Well, but is your name Georges?"

"What is the matter?" asked the steward, intervening.

"Monsieur, my name is Georges Marest; I am the son of a rich hardware dealer, wholesale, in the Rue Saint-Martin, and I have come on business to Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy from Maître Crottat, his notary—I am his second clerk."

"And I can only repeat, sir, what monsieur said to me—'A gentleman will come,' says he, 'a Colonel Czerni-Georges, aide-de-camp to Mina, who traveled down in Pierrotin's chaise. If he asks for me, show him at once into the drawing-room.'"

"There is no joking with his excellency," said the steward. "You had better go in, monsieur. But how is it that his excellency came down without announcing his purpose? And how does he know that you traveled by Pierrotin's chaise?"

"It is perfectly clear," said the clerk, "that the count is the gentleman who, but for the civility of a young man, would have had to ride on the front seat of Pierrotin's coucou."

"On the front seat of Pierrotin's coucou?" cried the steward and the farm-girl.

"I am quite sure of it from what this girl tells me," said Georges Marest.

"But how——?" the steward began.

"Ah, there you are!" cried Georges. "To humbug the other travelers, I told them a heap of cock-and-bull stories about Egypt, Greece, and Spain. I had spurs on, and I gave myself out as a colonel in the cavalry—a mere joke."

"And what was the gentleman like, whom you believe to be the count?" asked Moreau.

"Why, he has a face the color of brick," said Georges, "with perfectly white hair and black eyebrows."

"That is the man!"

"I am done for!" said Georges Marest.

"Why?"

"I made fun of his orders."

"Pooh, he is a thorough good fellow; you will have amused him. Come to the castle forthwith," said Moreau. "I am going up to the count. Where did he leave you?"

"At the top of the hill."

"I can make neither head nor tail of it!" cried Moreau.

"After all, I poked fun at him, but I did not insult him," said the clerk to himself.

"And what are you here for?" asked the steward.

"I have brought the deed of sale of the farm-lands of les Moulineaux, ready made out."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Moreau. "I don't understand."

Moreau felt his heart beat painfully when, after knocking two raps on his master's door, he heard in reply—

"Is that you, Monsieur Moreau?"

"Yes, monseigneur."

"Come in."

The count was dressed in white trousers and thin boots, a

white vest, and a black coat on which glittered, on the right-hand side, the star of the grand cross of the Legion of Honor, and on the left, from a buttonhole, hung that of the Golden Fleece from a gold chain; the blue ribbon was conspicuous across his vest. He had dressed his hair himself, and had no doubt got himself up to do the honors of Presles to Margueron, and, perhaps, to impress that worthy with the atmosphere of grandeur.

"Well, monsieur," said the count, who remained sitting, but allowed Moreau to stand, "so we cannot come to terms with Margueron?"

"At the present moment he wants entirely too much for his farm."

"But why should he not come over here to talk about it?" said the count in an absent-minded way.

"He is ill, monseigneur——"

"Are you sure?"

"I went over there——"

"Monsieur," said the count, assuming a stern expression that was terrible, "what would you do to a man whom you had allowed to see you dress a wound you wished to keep secret, and who went off to make game of it with a street trollop?"

"I should give him a sound thrashing."

"And if, in addition to this, you discovered that he was cheating your confidence and robbing you?"

"I should try to catch him out and send him to the hulks."

"Listen, Monsieur Moreau. You have, I suppose, discussed my health with Madame Clapart and made fun at her house of my devotion to my wife, for little Husson was giving to the passengers in a public conveyance a vast deal of information with reference to my cures, in my presence, this very morning, and in what words! God knows! He dared to slander my wife.

"Again, I heard from Farmer Léger's own lips, as he re-

turned from Paris in Pierrotin's chaise, of the plan concocted by the notary of Beaumont with him, and with you, with reference to les Moulineaux. If you have been at all to see Margueron, it was to instruct him to sham illness; he is so little ill that I expect him to dinner, and he is coming. Well, monsieur, as to your having made a fortune of two hundred and fifty thousand francs in seventeen years—I forgive you. I understand it. If you had but asked me for what you took from me, or what others offered you, I would have given it to you; you have a family to provide for. Even with your want of delicacy you have treated me better than another might have done, that I believe——

"But that you, who know all that I have done for my country, for France, you who have seen me sit up a hundred nights and more to work for the Emperor, or toiling eighteen hours a day for three months on end; that you, who know my worship of Madame de Sérizy, should have gossiped about it before a boy, have betrayed my secrets to the mockery of a Madame Husson——"

"Monseigneur!"

"It is unpardonable. To damage a man's interest is nothing, but to strike at his heart! Ah! you do not know what you have done!"

The count covered his face with his hands and was silent for a moment.

"I leave you in possession of what you have," he went on, "and I will forget you. As a point of dignity, of honor, we will part without quarreling, for, at this moment, I can remember what your father did for mine.

"You must come to terms—good terms—with Monsieur de Reybert, your successor. Be calm, as I am. Do not make yourself a spectacle for fools. Above all, no bluster and no haggling. Though you have forfeited my confidence, try to preserve the decorum of wealth. As to the little wretch who has half killed me, he is not to sleep at Presles. Send him

to the inn; I cannot answer for what I might do if he crossed my path."

"I do not deserve such leniency, monseigneur," said Moreau, with tears in his eyes. "If I had been utterly dishonest I should have five hundred thousand francs; and indeed I will gladly account for every franc in detail. But permit me to assure you, monseigneur, that when I spoke of you to Madame Clapart it was never in derision. On the contrary, it was to deplore your condition and to ask her whether she did not know of some remedy, unfamiliar to the medical profession, which the common people use. I have spoken of you in the boy's presence when he was asleep—but he heard me, it would seem!—and always in terms of the deepest affection and respect. Unfortunately, a blunder is sometimes punished as a crime. Still, while I bow to the decisions of your just anger, I would have you to know what really happened. Yes, it was heart to heart that I spoke of you to Madame Clapart. And only ask my wife; never have I mentioned these matters to her——"

"That will do," said the count, whose conviction was complete. "We are not children; the past is irrevocable—— Go and set your affairs and mine in order. You may remain in the lodge till the month of October. Monsieur and Madame de Reybert will live in the castle. Above all, try to live with them as gentlemen should—hating each other, but keeping up appearances."

The count and Moreau went downstairs, Moreau as white as the count's hair, Monsieur de Sérizy calm and dignified.

While this scene was going forward, the Beaumont coach, leaving Paris at one o'clock, had stopped at the gate of Presles to set down Maître Crottat, who, in obedience to the count's orders, was shown into the drawing-room to wait for him; there he found his clerk excessively crestfallen, in company with the two painters, all three conspicuously uncom-

fortable. Monsieur de Reybert, a man of fifty, with a very surly expression, had brought with him old Margueron and the notary from Beaumont, who held a bundle of leases and title-deeds.

When this assembled party saw the count appear in full court costume, Georges Marest had a spasm in the stomach and Joseph Bridau felt a qualm; but Mistigris, who was himself in his Sunday clothes, and who indeed had no crime on his conscience, said loud enough to be heard—

"Well, he looks much nicer now."

"You little rascal," said the count, drawing him toward him by one ear, "so we both deal in decorations! Do you recognize your work, my dear Schinner?" he went on, pointing to the ceiling.

"Monseigneur," said the artist, "I was so foolish as to assume so famous a name out of bravado; but to-day's experience makes it incumbent on me to do something good and win glory for that of Joseph Bridau."

"You took my part," said the count eagerly, "and I hope you will do me the pleasure of dining with me—you and your witty Mistigris."

"You do not know to what you are exposing yourself," said the audacious youngster; "an empty stomach knows no peers."

"Bridau," said the count, struck by a sudden reminiscence, "are you related to one of the greatest workers under the Empire, a brigadier in command who died a victim to his zeal?"

"I am his son, my lord," said Joseph, bowing.

"Then you are welcome here," replied the count, taking the artist's hand in both his own; "I knew your father, and you may depend on me as on—an American uncle," said Monsieur de Sérizy, smiling. "But you are too young to have a pupil—to whom does Mistigris belong?"

"To my friend Schinner, who has lent him to me," replied

Joseph. "Mistigris' name is Léon de Lora. My lord, if you remember my father, will you condescend to bear in mind his other son, who stands accused of conspiring against the State, and is on his trial before the Supreme Court——"

"To be sure," said the count. "I will bear it in mind, believe me. As to Prince Czerni-Georges, Ali Pasha's ally, and Mina's aide-de-camp——" said the count, turning to Georges.

"He?—my second clerk?" cried Crottat.

"You are under a mistake, Maître Crottat," said Monsieur de Sérizy, very severely. "A clerk who hopes ever to become a notary does not leave important documents in a diligence at the mercy of his fellow-travelers! A clerk who hopes to become a notary does not spend twenty francs between Paris and Moisselles! A clerk who hopes to become a notary does not expose himself to arrest as a deserter——"

"Monseigneur," said Georges Marest, "I may have amused myself by playing a practical joke on a party of travelers, but——"

"Do not interrupt his excellency," said his master, giving him a violent nudge in the ribs.

"A notary ought early to develop the gifts of discretion, prudence, and discernment, and not mistake a minister of State for a candlemaker."

"I accept sentence for my errors," said Georges; "but I did not leave my papers at the mercy——"

"You are at this moment committing the error of giving the lie to a minister of State, a peer of France, a gentleman, an old man—and a client. Look for your deed of sale."

The clerk turned over the papers in his portfolio.

"Do not make a mess of your papers," said the count, taking the document out of his pocket. "Here is the deed you are seeking."

Crottat turned it over three times, so much was he amazed at receiving it from the hands of his noble client.

"What, sir!" he at last began, addressing Georges.

"If I had not taken it," the count went on, "Père Léger —who is not such a fool as you fancy him from his questions as to agriculture, since they might have taught you that a man should always be thinking of his business—Père Léger might have gotten hold of it and discovered my plans. You also will give me the pleasure of your company at dinner, but on condition of telling us the history of the Moslem's execution at Smyrna, and of finishing the memoirs of some client which you read, no doubt, before publication."

"A trouncing for bouncing!" said Léon de Lora, in a low voice to Joseph Bridau.

"Gentlemen," said the count to the notary from Beaumont, to Crottat, Margueron, and Reybert, "come into the other room. We will not sit down to dinner till we have concluded our bargain; for, as my friend Mistigris says, we must know when to *creep* silent."

"Well, he is a thoroughly good fellow," said Léon de Lora to Georges Marest.

"Yes; but if he is a good fellow, my governor is not, and he will request me to play my tricks elsewhere."

"Well, you like traveling," said Bridau.

"What a dressing that boy will get from Monsieur and Madame Moreau!" cried Léon de Lora.

"The little idiot!" said Georges. "But for him the count would have thought it all very good fun. Well, well, it is a useful lesson, and if I am caught chattering in a coach again——"

"Oh, it is a stupid thing to do," said Joseph Bridau.

"And vulgar, too," said Mistigris. "Keep your tongue to clean your teeth."

While the business of the farm was being discussed between Monsieur Margueron and the Comte de Sérizy, with the assistance of the three notaries, and in the presence of Mons. de Reybert, Moreau was slowly making his way home. He went

in without looking about him, and sat down on a sofa in the drawing-room, while Oscar Husson crept into a corner out of sight, so terrified was he by the steward's white face.

"Well, my dear," said Estelle, coming in, fairly tired out by all she had had to do, "what is the matter?"

"My dear, we are ruined, lost beyond redemption. I am no longer land steward of Presles! The count has withdrawn his confidence."

"And what has caused——"

"Old Léger, who was in Pierrotin's chaise, let out all about the farm of les Moulineaux; but it is not that which has cut me off for ever from his favor——"

"What then?"

"Oscar spoke ill of the countess, and talked of monseigneur's ailments——"

"Oscar?" cried Madame Moreau. "You are punished by your own act! A pretty viper you have nursed in your bosom. How often have I told you——"

"That will do," said Moreau hoarsely.

At this instant Estelle and her husband detected Oscar huddled in a corner. Moreau pounced on the luckless boy like a kite on its prey, seized him by the collar of his olive-green coat, and forcibly dragged him into the daylight of a window.

"Speak! What did you say to monseigneur in the coach? What devil loosened your tongue, when you always stand moonstruck if I ask you a question? What did you do it for?" said the steward with terrific violence.

Oscar, too much scared for tears, kept silence, as motionless as a statue.

"Come and ask his excellency's pardon!" said Moreau.

"As if his excellency cared about a vermin like him!" shrieked Estelle in a fury.

"Come—come to the castle!" Moreau repeated.

Oscar collapsed, a lifeless heap on the floor.

"Will you come, I say?" said Moreau, his rage increasing every moment.

"No, no; have pity!" cried Oscar, who could not face a punishment worse than death.

Moreau took the boy by the collar and dragged him like a corpse across the courtyard, which rang with the boy's cries and sobs; he hauled him up the steps and flung him, howling and as rigid as a post, into the drawing-room at the feet of the count, who, having settled for the purchase of les Moulineaux, was just passing into the dining-room with his friends.

"On your knees, on your knees, wretched boy. Ask pardon of the man who has fed your mind by getting you a scholarship at college," cried Moreau.

Oscar lay with his face on the ground, foaming with rage. Everybody was startled. Moreau, quite beside himself, was purple in the face from the rush of blood to his head.

"This boy is mere vanity," said the count, after waiting in vain for Oscar's apology. "Pride can humble itself, for there is dignity in some self-humiliation. I am afraid you will never make anything of this fellow."

And the Minister passed on.

Moreau led Oscar away and back to his own house.

While the horses were being harnessed to the traveling chaise, he wrote the following letter to Madame Clapart:

"Oscar, my dear, has brought me to ruin. In the course of his journey in Pierrotin's chaise this morning he spoke of the flirtations of Madame la Comtesse to his excellency himself, who was traveling incognito, and told the count his own secrets as to the skin disease brought on by long nights of hard work in his various high offices. After dismissing me from my place, the count desired me not to allow Oscar to sleep at Presles, but to send him home. In obedience to his orders I am having my horses put to my wife's carriage, and Brochon, my groom, will take the little wretch to you.

"My wife and I are in a state of despair, which you may imagine, but which I cannot attempt to describe. I will come to see you in a few days, for I must make my plans. I have three children; I must think of the future, and I do not yet know what to decide on, for I am determined to show the count the value of seventeen years of the life of such a man as I. I have two hundred and sixty thousand francs, and I mean to acquire such a fortune as will allow me to be, some day, not much less than his excellency's equal. At this instant I feel that I could remove mountains and conquer insurmountable difficulties. What a lever is such a humiliating scene!——

"Whose blood can Oscar have in his veins? I cannot compliment you on your son; his behavior is that of an owl. At this moment of writing he has not yet uttered a word in reply to my questions and my wife's. Is he becoming idiotic, or is he idiotic already? My dear friend, did you not give him due injunctions before he started? How much misfortune you would have spared me by coming with him, as I begged you. If you were afraid of Estelle, you could have stayed at Moisselles. However, it is all over now. Farewell till we meet, soon.

"Your faithful friend and servant,

"MOREAU."

At eight o'clock that evening Madame Clapart had come in from a little walk with her husband, and sat knitting stockings for Oscar by the light of a single dip. Monsieur Clapart was expecting a friend named Poiret, who sometimes came in for a game of dominoes, for he never trusted himself to spend an evening in a café. In spite of temperance, enforced on him by his narrow means, Clapart could not have answered for his abstinence when in the midst of food and drink, and surrounded by other men, whose laughter might have nettled him.

"I am afraid Poiret may have been and gone," said he to his wife.

"The lodge-keeper would have told us, my dear," replied his wife.

"She may have forgotten."

"Why should she forget?"

"It would not be the first time she has forgotten things that concern us; God knows, anything is good enough for people who have no servants!"

"Well, well," said the poor woman, to change the subject and escape her husband's pin-stabs. "Oscar is at Presles by this time; he will be very happy in that beautiful place, that fine park——"

"Oh, yes, you expect great things!" retorted Clapart. "He will make hay there with a vengeance!"

"Will you never cease to be spiteful to that poor boy? What harm has he done you? Dear heaven! if ever we are in easy circumstances we shall owe it to him perhaps, for he has a good heart."

"Our bones will be gelatine long before that boy succeeds in the world!" said Clapart. "And he will have altered very considerably! Why, you don't know your own boy; he is a braggart, a liar, lazy, incapable——"

"Supposing you were to go to fetch Poiret," said the hapless mother, struck to the heart by the diatribe she had brought down on her own head.

"A boy who never took a prize at school!" added Clapart.

In the eyes of the commoner sort, bringing home prizes from school is positive proof of future success in life.

"Did you ever take a prize?" retorted his wife. "And Oscar got the fourth *accessit* (second-premium) in philosophy?"

This speech reduced Clapart to silence for a moment.

"And beside," he presently went on, "Madame Moreau must love him as she loves a nail—you know where; she will

try to set her husband against him. Oscar steward at Presles! Why, he must thoroughly understand land-surveying and agriculture——"

"He can learn."

"He! Never! I bet you that if he got a place there he would not be in it a week before he had done something clumsy, and was packed off by the Comte de Sérizy——"

"Good heavens! How can you be so vicious about the future prospects of a poor boy, full of good points, as sweet as an angel, and incapable of doing an ill turn to any living soul?"

At this moment the cracking of a post-boy's whip and the clatter of a chaise at top speed, with the hoofs of horses pulled up sharply at the outer gate, had roused the whole street. Clapart, hearing every window flung open, went out on the landing.

"Oscar, sent back by post!" cried he in a tone in which his satisfaction gave way to genuine alarm.

"Good God! what can have happened?" said the poor mother, trembling as a leaf is shaken by an autumn wind.

Brochon came upstairs, followed by Oscar and Poiret.

"Good heavens, what has happened?" repeated she, appealing to the groom.

"I don't know, but Monsieur Moreau is no longer steward of Presles, and they say it is your son's doing, and monseigneur has ordered him home again. However, here is a letter from poor Monsieur Moreau, who is so altered, madame, it is dreadful to see."

"Clapart, a glass of wine for the post-boy and one for monsieur," said his wife, who dropped into an armchair and read the terrible letter, "Oscar," she went on, dragging herself to her bed, "you want to kill your mother! After all I said to you this morning——" But Madame Clapart did not finish her sentence; she fainted with misery.

Oscar remained standing, speechless. Madame Clapart, as

she recovered her senses, heard her husband saying to the boy as he shook him by the arm—

"Will you speak?"

"Go to bed at once, sir," said she to her son. "And leave him in peace, Monsieur Clapart; do not drive him out of his wits, for he is dreadfully altered!"

Oscar did not hear his mother's remark; he had made for bed the instant he was told.

Those who have any recollection of their own boyhood will not be surprised to hear that, after a day or so full of events and agitations, Oscar slept the sleep of the just in spite of the enormity of his sins. Nay, next day he did not find the whole face of nature so much changed as he expected, and was astonished to find that he was hungry, after regarding himself the day before as unworthy to live. He had suffered only in mind, and at that age mental impressions succeed each other so rapidly that each wipes out the last, however deep it may have seemed.

Hence corporal punishment, though philanthropists have made a strong stand against it of late years, is in some cases necessary for children; also, it is perfectly natural, for Nature herself has no other means but the infliction of pain to produce a lasting impression of her lessons. If to give weight to the shame, unhappily too transient, which had overwhelmed Oscar, the steward had given him a sound thrashing, the lesson might have been effectual. The discernment needed for the proper infliction of such corrections is the chief argument against their use; for Nature never makes a mistake, while the teacher must often blunder.

Madame Clapart took care to send her husband out next morning to have her son to herself. She was in a pitiable condition. Her eyes red with weeping, her face worn by a sleepless night, her voice broken; everything in her seemed to sue for mercy by the signs of such grief as she could not have endured a second time. When Oscar entered the room,

she beckoned to him to sit down by her, and in a mild but feeling voice reminded him of all the kindness done them by the steward of Presles. She explained to Oscar that for the last six years especially she had lived on Moreau's ingenious charity. Monsieur Clapart's appointment, which they owed, no less than Oscar's scholarship, to the Comte de Sérizy, he would some day cease to hold. Clapart could not claim a pension, not having served long enough either in the Treasury or the city to ask for one. And when Monsieur Clapart should be shelved, what was to become of them?

"I," she said, "by becoming a sick-nurse or taking a place as housekeeper in some gentleman's house, could make my living and keep Monsieur Clapart; but what would become of you? You have no fortune, and you must work for your living. There are but four openings for lads like you—trade, the civil service, the liberal professions, and military service. A young man who has no capital must contribute faithful service and brains; but great discretion is needed in business, and your behavior yesterday makes your success very doubtful. For an official career you have to begin, for years perhaps, as a supernumerary, and need interest to back you; and you have alienated the only protector we ever had—a man high in power. And, beside, even if you were blest with the exceptional gifts which enable a young man to rise rapidly, either in business or in an official position, where are we to find the money for food and clothing while you are learning your work?"

And here his mother, like all women, went off into wordy lamentations. What could she do now that she was deprived of the gifts of produce which Moreau was able to send her while managing Presles? Oscar had overthrown his best friend.

Next to trade and office work, of which her son need not even think, came the legal profession as a notary, a pleader, an attorney, or a sheriff. But then he must study law for

three years at least, and pay heavy fees for his admission, his examinations, his *theses*, and diploma; the number of competitors was so great that superior talent was indispensable, and how was he to live? That was the constantly recurring question.

"Oscar," she said in conclusion, "all my pride, all my life were centred in you. I could bear to look forward to an old age of poverty, for I kept my eyes on you; I saw you entering on a prosperous career, and succeeding in it. That hope has given me courage to endure the privations I have gone through during the last six years to keep you at school, for it has cost seven or eight hundred francs a year beside the half-scholarship. Now that my hopes are crushed, I dread to think of your future fate. I must not spend a sou of Monsieur Clapart's salary on my own son.

"What do you propose to do? You are not a good enough mathematician to pass into a specialist college; and, beside, where could I find the three thousand francs a year for your training? This is life, my dear child! Well, you are eighteen, and a strong lad—enlist as a soldier; it is the only way you can make a living."

Oscar as yet knew nothing of life. Like all boys who have been brought up in ignorance of the poverty at home, he had no idea of the need to work for his living; the word *trade* conveyed no idea to his mind; and the words *Government office* did not mean much, for he knew nothing of the work. He listened with a look of submission, which he tried to make penitential, but his mother's remonstrances were lost in air. However, at the idea of being a soldier, and on seeing the tears in his mother's eyes, the boy, too, was ready to weep. As soon as Madame Clapart saw the drops on her boy's cheeks, she was quite disarmed; and, like all mothers in a similar position, she fell back on the generalities which wind up this sort of attack, in which they suffer all their own sorrows and their children's at the same time.

"Come, Oscar, promise me to be more cautious for the future, not to blurt out whatever comes uppermost, to moderate your absurd conceit——" and so on.

Oscar was ready to promise all his mother asked, and, pressing him gently to her heart, Madame Clapart ended by embracing him to comfort him for the scolding he had had.

"Now," said she, "you will listen to your mother and follow her advice, for a mother can give her son none but good advice. We will go and see your Uncle Cardot. He is our last hope. Cardot owed a great deal to your father, who, by allowing him to marry his sister, with what was then an immense marriage portion, enabled him to make a large fortune in silk. I fancy he would place you with Monsieur Camusot, his son-in-law and successor, in the Rue des Bourdonnais.

"Still, your Uncle Cardot has four children of his own. He made over his store, the Cocon d'Or (Golden Cocoon), to his eldest daughter, Madame Camusot. Though Camusot has millions, there are the four children, by two wives, and he hardly knows of our existence. Marianne, his second girl, married Monsieur Protez, of Protez and Chiffreville. He paid four hundred thousand francs to put his eldest son in business as a notary; and he has just invested for his second son Joseph as a partner in the business of Matifat, drug importers. Thus your Uncle Cardot may very well not choose to be troubled about you, whom he sees but four times a year. He has never been to call on me here; but he could come to see me when I was in *Madame Mère's* household, to be allowed to supply silks to their Imperial highnesses, and the Emperor, and the grandees at Court. And now the Camusots are *Ultras!* Camusot's eldest son, by his first wife, married the daughter of a gentleman usher to the King! Well, when the world stoops it grows hunchbacked. And, after all, it is a good business; the Cocon d'Or has the custom of the Court under the Bourbons as it had under the Emperor.

"To-morrow we will go to see your Uncle Cardot, and I hope you will contrive to behave; for, as I tell you, in him is our last hope."

Monsieur Jean-Jérôme-Séverin Cardot had lost his second wife six years since—Mademoiselle Husson—on whom, in the days of his glory, the contractor had bestowed a marriage portion of a hundred thousand francs in hard cash. Cardot, the head-clerk of the Cocon d'Or, one of the old-established Paris houses, had bought the business in 1793 when its owners were ruined by the *maximum*, and Mademoiselle Husson's money to back him had enabled him to make an almost colossal fortune in ten years. To provide handsomely for his children, he had very ingeniously invested three hundred thousand francs in annuities for himself and his wife, which brought him in thirty thousand francs a year. The rest of his capital he divided into three portions of four hundred thousand francs for his younger children, and the store was taken as representing that sum by Camusot when he married the eldest girl. Thus the old fellow, now nearly seventy, could dispose of his thirty thousand francs a year without damaging his children's interests; they were all well married, and no avaricious hopes could interfere with their filial affection.

Uncle Cardot lived at Belleville in one of the first houses just above la Courtille. He rented a second floor, whence there was a fine view over the Seine valley, an apartment for which he paid a thousand francs a year, facing south, with the exclusive enjoyment of a large garden; thus he never troubled himself about the three or four other families inhabiting the spacious country house. Secure, by a long lease, of ending his days there, he lived rather shabbily, waited on by his old cook and by a maid who had been attached to his late wife, both of whom looked forward to an annuity of some six hundred francs at his death, and consequently did not rob him.

These two women took incredible care of their master, and with all the more devotion since no one could be less fractious or fidgety than he.

The rooms, furnished by the late Madame Cardot, had remained unaltered for six years, and the old man was quite content; he did not spend a thousand crowns a year there, for he dined out in Paris five days a week, and came home at midnight in a private fly that he took at the Barrière de la Courtille. They had hardly anything to do beyond providing him with breakfast. The old man breakfasted at eleven o'clock, then he dressed and scented himself and went to Paris. A man usually gives notice when he means to dine out; Monsieur Cardot gave notice when he was to dine at home.

This little old gentleman, plump, rosy, square, and hearty, was always as neat as a pin, as the saying goes; that is to say, always in black silk stockings, corded silk knee-breeches, a white marcella vest, dazzlingly white linen, and a dark blue coat; he wore violet silk gloves, gold buckles to his shoes and breeches, a touch of powder on his hair, and a small queue tied with black ribbon. His face was noticeable for the thick, bushy eyebrows, beneath which sparkled his gray eyes, and a large squarely-cut nose that made him look like some venerable prebendary. This countenance did not belie the man. Old Cardot was, in fact, one of the race of frisky "Gérontes" who are disappearing day by day, and who played the part of Turcaret in all the romances and comedies of the eighteenth century. Uncle Cardot would speak to a woman as "Lady fair;" he would take home any woman in a coach who had no other protector; he was "theirs to command," to use his own expression, with a chivalrous flourish. His calm face and snowy hair were the adjuncts of an old age wholly devoted to pleasure. Among men he boldly professed Epicureanism, and allowed himself rather a broad style of jokes. He had made no objection when his son-in-law Camu-

sot attached himself to Coralie, the fascinating actress, for he was, in secret, the Mæcenas of Mademoiselle Florentine,* leading dancer at the Gaîté theatre.

Still, nothing appeared on the surface, or in his evident conduct, to tell tales of these opinions and this mode of life. Uncle Cardot, grave and polite, was supposed to be almost cold, such a display did he make of the proprieties, and even a bigot would have called him a hypocrite. This worthy gentleman particularly detested the priesthood, he was one of the large body of silly people who subscribe to the "Constitutionnel," and was much exercised about the refusal of rights of burial. He adored Voltaire, though his preference as a matter of taste was for Piron, Verdé, and Collé. Of course, he admired Béranger, of whom he spoke ingeniously as the "high-priest of the religion of Lisette." His daughters, Madame Camusot and Madame Protez, and his two sons would indeed have been knocked flat, to use a vulgar phrase, if any one had told them what their father meant by singing "La Mère Godichon."

The shrewd old man had never told his children of his annuity; and they, seeing him live so poorly, all believed that he had stripped himself of his fortune for them, and overwhelmed him with care and affection. And he would sometimes say to his sons: "Do not lose your money, for I have none to leave you." Camusot, who was a man after his own heart, and whom he liked well enough to allow him to join his little parties, was the only one who knew of his annuity of thirty thousand francs. Camusot highly applauded the old fellow's philosophy, thinking that after providing so liberally for his children and doing his duty so thoroughly, he had a right to end his days jovially.

"You see, my dear fellow," the old master of the Cocon d'Or would say to his son-in-law, "I might have married again, no doubt, and a young wife would have had children.

* See "A Provincial at Paris."

Oh, yes, I should have had children, I was at an age when men always have children. Well, Florentine does not cost me so much as a wife, she never bores me, she will not plague me with children, and will not make a hole in your fortune." And Camusot discovered in old Cardot an admirable feeling for the Family, regarding him as a perfect father-in-law. "He succeeds," he would say, "in reconciling the interests of his children with the pleasures it is natural to indulge in in old age after having gone through all the anxieties of business."

Neither the Cardots, nor the Camusots, nor the Protez suspected what the existence was of their old aunt, Madame Clapart. The communications had always been restricted to sending formal letters on the occasions of a death or a marriage, and visiting cards on New Year's Day. Madame Clapart was too proud to sacrifice her feelings for anything but her Oscar's interests, and acted under the influence of her regard for Moreau, the only person who had remained faithful to her in misfortune. She had never wearied old Cardot by her presence or her importunities, but she had clung to him as to a hope. She called on him once a quarter, and talked to him of Oscar Husson, the nephew of the late respected Madame Cardot, taking the lad to see Uncle Cardot three times a year, in the holidays. On each occasion the old man took Oscar to dine at the Cadran bleu (the Blue Dial), and to the Gaîté in the evening, taking him home afterward to the Rue de la Cerisaie. On one occasion, after giving him a new suit of clothes, he had made him a present of the silver mug and spoon and fork required as part of every boarding-school boy's equipment.

Oscar's mother had tried to convince the old man that Oscar was very fond of him, and she was always talking of the silver mug and spoon and the beautiful suit, of which nothing now survived but the vest. But these little insinuating attentions did Oscar more harm than good with so cunning an old fox as Uncle Cardot. Old Cardot had not been devoted to

his late lamented, a bony red-haired woman ; also he knew the circumstances of the deceased Husson's marriage to Oscar's mother; and without looking down on her in any way, he knew that Oscar had been born after his father's death, so his poor nephew seemed an absolute alien to the Cardot family. Unable to foresee disaster, Oscar's mother had not made up for this lack of natural ties between the boy and his uncle, and had not succeeded in implanting in the old merchant any liking for her boy in his earliest youth. Like all women who are absorbed in the one idea of motherhood, Madame Clapart could not put herself in Uncle Cardot's place ; she thought he ought to be deeply interested in such a charming boy, whose name, too, was that of the late Madame Cardot.

" Monsieur, here is the mother of your nephew Oscar," said the maid to Monsieur Cardot, who was airing himself in the garden before breakfast, after being shaved and having his head dressed by the barber.

" Good-morning, lady fair," said the old silk-merchant, bowing to Madame Clapart, while he wrapped his white quilted dressing-gown across him. "Ah, ha ! your youngster is growing apace," he added, pulling Oscar by the ear.

" He has finished his schooling, and he was very sorry that his dear uncle was not present at the distribution of prizes at the Collége Henri IV., for he was named. The name of Husson, of which, let us hope, he may prove worthy, was honorably mentioned."

" The deuce it was ! " said the little man, stopping short. He was walking with Madame Clapart and Oscar on a terrace where there were orange-trees, myrtles, and pomegranate shrubs. "And what did he get?"

" The fourth *accessit** in philosophy," said the mother triumphantly.

" Oh, ho. He has some way to go yet to make up for lost time," cried Uncle Cardot. " To end with an *accessit*—is

* Second best premium.

not the treasure of Peru. You will breakfast with me?" said he.

"We are at your commands," replied Madame Clapart. "Oh, my dear Monsieur Cardot, what a comfort it is to a father and mother when their children make a good start in life. From that point of view, as indeed from every other," she put in, correcting herself, "you are one of the happiest fathers I know. In the hands of your admirable son-in-law and your amiable daughter, the Cocon d'Or is still the best store of the kind in Paris. Your eldest son has been for years as a notary at the head of the best-known business in Paris, and he married a rich woman. Your youngest is a partner in a first-rate druggist's business. And you have the sweetest grandchildren. You are the head of four flourishing familes. Oscar, leave us; go and walk round the garden, and do not touch the flowers."

"Why, he is eighteen!" exclaimed Uncle Cardot, smiling at this injunction, as though Oscar was a child!

"Alas! indeed he is, my dear Monsieur Cardot; and after bringing him up to that age neither crooked nor bandy, sound in mind and body, after sacrificing everything to give him an education, it would be hard indeed not to see him start on the way to fortune."

"Well, Monsieur Moreau, who got you his half-scholarship at the Collége Henri IV., will start him in the right road," said Uncle Cardot, hiding his hypocrisy under an affectation of bluntness.

"Monsieur Moreau may die," said she. "Beside, he has quarreled beyond remedy with Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy, his patron."

"The deuce he has! Listen, madame, I see what you are coming to——"

"No, monsieur," said Oscar's mother, cutting the old man short; while he, out of respect for a "lady fair," controlled the impulse of annoyance at being interrupted. "Alas! you

can know nothing of the anguish of a mother who for seven years has been obliged to take six hundred francs a year out of her husband's salary of eighteen hundred. Yes, monsieur, that is our whole income. So what can I do for my Oscar? Monsieur Clapart so intensely hates the poor boy that I really cannot keep him at home. What can a poor woman do under such circumstances but come to consult the only relative her boy has under heaven!"

"You did quite right," replied Monsieur Cardot, "you never said anything of all this before——"

"Indeed, monsieur," replied Madame Clapart with pride, "you are the last person to whom I would confess the depth of my poverty. It is all my own fault; I married a man whose incapacity is beyond belief. Oh! I am a most miserable woman."

"Listen, madame," said the little old man gravely. "Do not cry. I cannot tell you how much it pains me to see a fair lady in tears. After all, your boy's name is Husson; and if the dear departed were alive, she would do something for the sake of her father's and brother's name——"

"She truly loved her brother!" cried Oscar's mother.

"But all my fortune is divided among my children, who have nothing further to expect from me," the old man went on. "I divided the two million francs I had among them; I wished to see them happy in my lifetime. I kept nothing for myself but an annuity, and at my time of life a man clings to his habits. Do you know what you must do with this youngster?" said he, calling back Oscar and taking him by the arm. "Put him to study law, I will pay for his matriculation and preliminary fees. Place him with an attorney; let him learn all the tricks of the trade; if he does well, and gets on and likes the work, and if I am still alive, each of my children will, when the time comes, lend him a quarter of the sum necessary to purchase a connection; I will stand surety for him. From now till then you have only to feed and

clothe him; he will know some hard times no doubt, but he will learn what life is. Why, why! I set out from Lyons with two double louis given me by my grandmother; I came to Paris on foot—and here I am! Short commons are good for the health. Young man, with discretion, honesty, and hard work, success is certain. It is a great pleasure to make your own fortune; and when a man has kept his teeth, he eats what he likes in his old age, singing 'La Mère Godichon' every now and then, as I do. Mark my words: Honesty, hard work, and discretion."

"You hear, Oscar," said his mother. "Your uncle has put in four words the sum-total of all my teaching, and you ought to stamp the last on your mind in letters of fire."

"Oh, it is there!" replied Oscar.

"Well, then, thank your uncle; do you not understand that he is providing for you in the future? You may be an attorney in Paris."

"He does not appreciate the splendor of his destiny," said the old man, seeing Oscar's bewildered face. "He has but just left school. Listen to me: I am not given to wasting words," his uncle went on. "Remember that at your age honesty is only secured by resisting temptations, and in a great city like Paris you meet them at every turn. Live in a garret under your mother's roof; go straight to your lecture, and from that to your office; work away morning, noon, and night, and study at home; be a second clerk by the time you are two-and-twenty, and a head-clerk at four-and-twenty. Get learning, and you are a made man. And then if you should not like that line of work, you might go into my son's office as a notary and succeed him. So work, patience, honesty, and discretion—these are your watchwords."

"And God grant you may live another thirty years to see your fifth child realize all our expectations!" cried Madame Clapart, taking the old man's hand and pressing it with a dignity worthy of her young days.

"Come, breakfast," said the kind old man, leading Oscar in by the ear.

During the meal Uncle Cardot watched his nephew on the sly, and soon discovered that he knew nothing of life.

"Send him to see me now and then," said he, as he took leave of her, with a nod to indicate Oscar. "I will lick him into shape."

This visit soothed the poor woman's worst grief, for she had not looked for such a happy result. For a fortnight she took Oscar out walking, watched over him almost tyrannically, and thus time went on till the end of October.

One morning Oscar saw the terrible steward walk in to find the wretched party in the Rue de la Cerisaie breakfasting off a salad of herring and lettuce, with a cup of milk to wash it down.

"We have settled in Paris, but we do not live as we did at Presles," said Moreau, who intended thus to make Madame Clapart aware of the change in their circumstances, brought about by Oscar's misdemeanor. "But I shall not often be in town. I have gone into partnership with old Léger and old Margueron of Beaumont. We are land agents, and we began by buying the estate of Persan. I am the head of the firm, which has altogether a million of francs, for I have borrowed on my property. When I find an opening, Père Léger and I go into the matter, and my partners each take a quarter and I half of the profits, for I have all the trouble; I shall always be on the road.

"My wife lives in Paris very quietly, in the Faubourg du Roule. When we have fairly started in business, and shall only be risking the interest on our money, if we are satisfied with Oscar, we may, perhaps, give him work."

"Well, after all, my friend, my unlucky boy's blunder will no doubt turn out to be the cause of your making a fine fortune, for you really were wasting your talents and energy

at Presles." Madame Clapart then told the story of her visit to Uncle Cardot, to show Moreau that she and her son might be no further expense to him.

"The old man is quite right," said the ex-steward. "Oscar must be kept to his work with a hand of iron, and he will no doubt make a notary or an attorney. But he must not wander from the line traced out for him. Ah! I know the man you want. The custom of an estate agent is valuable. I have been told of an attorney who has bought a practice without any connection. He is a young man, but as stiff as an iron bar, a tremendous worker, a perfect horse for energy and go; his name is Desroches. I will offer him all our business on condition of his taking Oscar in hand. I will offer him a premium of nine hundred francs, of which I will pay three hundred; thus your son will cost you only six hundred, and I will recommend him strongly to his master. If the boy is ever to become a man, it will be under that iron rule, for he will come out a notary, a pleader, or an attorney."

"Come, Oscar, thank Monsieur Moreau for his kindness; you stand there like a mummy. It is not every youth who blunders that is lucky enough to find friends to take an interest in him after being injured by him——"

"The best way to make matters up with me," said Moreau, taking Oscar's hand, "is to work steadily and behave well."

Ten days after this Oscar was introduced by Monsieur Moreau to Maître Desroches, attorney, lately established in the Rue de Béthisy, in spacious rooms at the end of a narrow court, at a relatively low rent. Desroches, a young man of six-and-twenty, the son of poor parents, austerely brought up by an excessively severe father, had himself known what it was to be in Oscar's position; he therefore took an interest in him, but only in the way of which he was himself capable, with all the hardness of his character. The manner of this tall, lean young lawyer, with a dull complexion, and his hair cut short

all over his head, sharp in his speech, keen-eyed, and gloomy though hasty, terrified poor Oscar.

"We work day and night here," said the lawyer from the depths of his chair, and from behind a long table, on which papers were piled in alps. "Monsieur Moreau, we will not kill him, but he will have to go our pace. Monsieur Godeschal!" he called out.

Although it was Sunday, the head-clerk appeared with a pen in his hand.

"Monsieur Godeschal, this is the articled pupil of whom I spoke, and in whom Monsieur Moreau takes the greatest interest; he will dine with us, and sleep in the little attic next to your room. You must allow him exactly time enough to get to the law-schools and back, so that he has not five minutes to lose; see that he learns the Code, and does well at lecture; that is to say, give him law books to read up when he has done his school work. In short, he is to be under your immediate direction, and I will keep an eye on him. We want to turn him out what you are yourself—a capital head-clerk—by the time he is ready to be sworn in as an attorney. Go with Godeschal, my little friend; he will show you your room, and you can move into it."

"You see, Godeschal?" Desroches went on, addressing Moreau. "He is a youngster without a sou, like myself; he is Mariette's brother, and she is saving for him, so that he may buy a connection ten years hence. All my clerks are youngsters, who have nothing to depend on but their ten fingers to make their fortune. And my five clerks and I work like any dozen of other men. In ten years I shall have the finest practice in Paris. We take a passionate interest here in our business and our clients, and that is beginning to be known. I got Godeschal from my greater brother in the law, Derville; with him he was second clerk, though only for a fortnight; but we had made friends in that huge office.

"I give Godeschal a thousand francs a year, with board and

lodging. The fellow is worth it to me; he is indefatigable! I like that boy! He managed to live on six hundred francs a year, as I did when I was a clerk. What I absolutely insist on is stainless honesty, and the man who can practice it in poverty *is* a man. The slightest failing on that score, and a clerk of mine goes!"

"Come, the boy is in a good school," said Moreau.

For two whole years Oscar lived in the Rue de Béthisy, in a den of the law; for if ever this old-fashioned term could be applied to a lawyer's office, it was to this of Desroches. Under this minute and strict supervision, he was kept so rigidly to hours and to work that his life in the heart of Paris was like that of a monk.

At five in the morning, in all weathers, Godeschal woke. He went down to the office with Oscar, to save a fire, and they always found the "chief" up and at work. Oscar did the errands and prepared his school-work—studies on an enormous scale. Godeschal, and often the chief himself, showed their pupil what authors to compare, and the difficulties to be met. Oscar was never allowed to pass from one chapter of the Code to the next till he had thoroughly mastered it, and had satisfied both Desroches and Godeschal, who put him through preliminary examinations, far longer and harder than those of the law-schools.

On his return from the schools, where he did not spend much time, he resumed his seat in the office and worked again; sometimes he went into the Courts, and he was at the bidding of the merciless Godeschal till dinner-time. Dinner, which he shared with his masters, consisted of a large dish of meat, a dish of vegetables, and a salad; for dessert there was a bit of Gruyère cheese. After dinner, Godeschal and Oscar went back to the office and worked there till the evening.

Once a month Oscar went to breakfast with his Uncle Cardot, and he spent the Sundays with his mother. Moreau from

time to time, if he came to the office on business, would take the boy to dine at the Palais-Royal and treat him to the play. Oscar had been so thoroughly snubbed by Godeschal and Desroches on the subject of his craving after fashion that he had ceased to think about dress.

"A good clerk," said Godeschal, "should have two black coats—one old and one new—black trousers, black stockings and shoes. Boots cost too much. You may have boots when you are an attorney. A clerk ought not to spend more than seven hundred francs in all. He should wear good, strong shirts of stout linen. Oh, when you start from zero to make a fortune, you must know how to limit yourself to what is strictly needful. Look at Monsieur Desroches! He did as we are doing, and you see he has succeeded."

Godeschal practiced what he preached. Professing the strictest principles of honor, reticence, and honesty, he acted on them without any display, as simply as he walked and breathed. It was the natural working of his soul, as walking and breathing are the working of certain organs.

Eighteen months after Oscar's arrival, the second clerk had made, for the second time, a small mistake in the accounts of his little cash-box. Godeschal addressed him in the presence of all the clerks—

"My dear Gaudet, leave on your own account, that it may not be said that the chief turned you out. You are either inaccurate or careless, and neither of those faults is of any use here. The chief shall not know, and that is the best I can do for an old fellow-clerk."

Thus, at the age of twenty, Oscar was third clerk in Maître Desroches' office. Though he earned no salary, yet he was fed and lodged, for he did the work of a second clerk. Desroches employed two managing clerks, and the second clerk was overdone with work. By the time he had got through his second year at the schools, Oscar, who knew more than many a man who has taken out his license, did the work of the

Courts very intelligently, and occasionally pleaded in chambers. In fact, Desroches and Godeschal expressed themselves satisfied.

Still, though he had become almost sensible, he betrayed a love of pleasure and a desire to shine, which were only subdued by the stern discipline and incessant toil of the life he led. The estate agent, satisfied with the boy's progress, then relaxed his strictness; and when, in the month of July, 1825, Oscar passed his final examination, Moreau gave him enough money to buy some good clothes. Madame Clapart, very happy and proud of her son, prepared a magnificent outfit for the qualified attorney, the second clerk, as he was soon to be. In poor families a gift always takes the form of something useful.

When the Courts reopened in the month of November, Oscar took the second clerk's room and his place, with a salary of eight hundred francs, board and lodging. And Uncle Cardot, who came privately to make inquiries about his nephew of Desroches, promised Madame Clapart that he would put Oscar in a position to buy a connection if he went on as he had begun.

In spite of such seeming wisdom, Oscar Husson was torn by many yearnings in the bottom of his soul. Sometimes he felt as if he must fly from a life so entirely opposed to his taste and character; a galley slave, he thought, was happier than he. Galled by his iron collar, he was sometimes tempted to run away when he compared himself with some well-dressed youth he met in the street. Now and then an impulse of folly with regard to women would surge up in him; and his resignation was only a part of his disgust of life. Kept steady by Godeschal's example, he was dragged rather than led by his will to follow so thorny a path.

Godeschal, who watched Oscar, made it his rule not to put his ward in the way of temptation. The boy had usually no money, or so little that he could not run into excesses. Dur-

ing the last year the worthy Godeschal had five or six times taken Oscar out for some "lark," paying the cost, for he perceived that the cord round this tethered kid's neck must be loosened; and these excesses, as the austere head-clerk termed them, helped Oscar to endure life. He found little to amuse him at his uncle's house, and still less at his mother's, for she lived even more frugally than Desroches.

Moreau could not, like Godeschal, make himself familiar with Oscar, and it is probable that this true protector made Godeschal his deputy in initiating the poor boy into the many mysteries of life. Oscar, thus learning discretion, could at last appreciate the enormity of the blunder he had committed during his ill-starred journey in the *coucou;* still, as the greater part of his fancies were so far suppressed, the follies of youth might yet lead him astray. However, as by degrees he acquired knowledge of the world and its ways, his reason developed; and so long as Godeschal did not lose sight of him, Moreau hoped to train Madame Clapart's son to a good end.

"How is he going on?" the estate agent asked on his return from a journey which had kept him away from Paris for some months.

"Still much too vain," replied Godeschal. "You give him good clothes and fine linen, he wears shirt-frills like a stockbroker, and my gentleman goes to walk in the Tuileries on Sundays in search of adventures. What can I say? He is young. He teases me to introduce him to my sister, in whose house he would meet a famous crew!—actresses, dancers, dandies, men who are eating themselves out of house and home. He is not cut out for an attorney, I fear. Still, he does not speak badly; he might become a pleader. He could argue a case from a well-prepared brief."

In November, 1825, when Oscar Husson was made second clerk, and was preparing his *thesis* for taking out his license,

a new fourth clerk came to Desroches' office to fill up the gap made by Oscar's promotion.

This fourth clerk, whose name was Frédéric Marest, was intended for the higher walks of the law, and was now ending his third year at the schools. From information received by the inquiring minds of the office, he was a handsome fellow of three-and-twenty, who had inherited about twelve thousand francs a year at the death of a bachelor uncle, and the son of a Madame Marest, the widow of a rich lumber merchant. The future judge, filled with the laudable desire to know his business in its minutest details, placed himself under Desroches, intending to study procedure, so as to be fit to take the place of a managing clerk in two years' time. His purpose was to go through his first stages as a pleader in Paris, so as to be fully prepared for an appointment, which, as a young man of wealth, he would certainly get. To see himself a public prosecutor, at the age of thirty, was the height of his ambition.

Though Frédéric Marest was the first cousin of Georges Marest, the practical joker of the journey to Presles, as young Husson knew this youth only by his first name, as Georges, the name of Frédéric Marest had no suggestions for him.

"Gentlemen," said Godeschal at breakfast, addressing all his underlings, "I have to announce the advent of a new student in law; and as he is very rich, we shall, I hope, make him pay his footing handsomely."

"Bring out the Book," cried Oscar to the youngest clerk, "and let us be serious, pray."

The boy clambered like a squirrel along the pigeon-holes to reach a volume lying on the top shelf, so as to collect all the dust.

"It is finely colored!" said the lad, holding it up.

We must now explain the perennial pleasantry which at that time gave rise to the existence of such a book in almost every lawyer's office. An old saying of the eighteenth cen-

tury—"Clerks only breakfast, farmers generally dine, and lords sup"—is still true, as regards the faculty of law, of every man who has spent two or three years studying procedure under an attorney, or the technicalities of a notary's business under some master of that branch. In the life of a lawyer's clerk work is so unremitting that pleasure is enjoyed all the more keenly for its rarity, and a practical joke especially is relished with rapture. This, indeed, is what explains up to a certain point Georges Marest's behavior in Pierrotin's chaise. The gloomiest of law-clerks is always a prey to the craving for farcical buffoonery. The instinct with which a practical joke or an occasion for fooling is jumped at and utilized among law-clerks is marvelous to behold, and is found in no other class but among artists. The studio and the lawyer's office are, in this respect, better than the stage.

Desroches, having started in an office without a connection, had, as it were, founded a new dynasty. This "Restoration" had interrupted the traditions of the office with regard to the footing of a new-comer. Desroches, indeed, settling in quarters where stamped paper had never yet been seen, had put in new tables and clean new file-boxes of white mill-board edged with blue. His staff consisted of clerks who had come from other offices with no connection between them, and thrown together by surprise, as it were.

But Godeschal, who had learned his fence under Derville, was not the man to allow the precious tradition of the *Bienvenue* to be lost. The *Bienvenue*, or welcome, is the breakfast which every new pupil must give to the "old boys" of the office to which he is articled. Now, just at the time when Oscar joined the office, in the first six months of Desroches' career, one winter afternoon when work was through much earlier than usual, and the clerks were warming themselves before going home, Godeschal hit upon the notion of concocting a sham register of the *fasti* and High Festivals of the Minions of the Law, a relic of great antiquity, saved from the

storms of the Revolution, and handed down from the office of the great Bordin, Attorney to the Châtelet, and the immediate predecessor of Sauvagnest, the attorney from whom Desroches had taken the office. The first thing was to find in some stationer's old stock a ledger with paper bearing an eighteenth-century watermark, and properly bound in parchment, in which to enter the decrees of the Council. Having discovered such a volume, it was tossed in the dust, in the ashes-pan, in the fireplace, in the kitchen; it was even left in what the clerks called the deliberating-room; and it had acquired a tint of mildew that would have enchanted a bookworm, the cracks of primeval antiquity, and corners so worn that the mice might have nibbled them off. The edges were rubbed with infinite skill. The book being thus perfected, here are a few passages which will explain to the dullest the uses to which Desroches' clerks devoted it, the first sixty pages being filled with sham reports of cases.

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. So be it.

"Whereas, on this day the Festival of our Lady Saint-Geneviève, patron saint of this good city of Paris, under whose protection the scribes and scriveners of this office have dwelt since the year of our Lord, 1525, we, the undersigned clerks and scriveners of this office of Master Jerosme-Sebastien Bordin, successor here to the deceased Guerbet, who in his lifetime served as attorney to the Châtelet, have recognized the need for us to replace the register and archives of installations of clerks in this glorious office, being ourselves distinguished members of the Faculty of the Law, which former register is now filled with the roll and record of our well-beloved predecessors, and we have besought the keeper of the Palace archives to bestow it with those of other offices, and we have all attended high mass in the parish church of Saint-Séverin to solemnize the opening of this our new register.

"In token whereof, we here sign and affix our names.

"MALIN, Head-Clerk.
"GREVIN, Second Clerk.
"ATHANASE FERET, Clerk.
"JACQUES HUET, Clerk.
"REGNALD DE SAINT-JEAN-D'ANGELY, Clerk.
"BEDEAU, Office Boy and Gutter-jumper.

"In the year of our Lord, 1787.

"Having attended mass, we went in a body to la Courtille, and had a great breakfast, which lasted until seven of the next morning."

This was a miracle of caligraphy. An expert could have sworn that the writing dated from the eighteenth century. Then follow twenty-seven reports in full of "Welcome" breakfasts, the last dating from the fatal year of 1792.

After a gap of fourteen years, the register reopened in 1806 with the appointment of Bordin to be attorney to the lower Court of the Seine. And this was the record of the re-constitution of the Kingdom of Basoche (the legal profession generally):

"God in His clemency has granted that in the midst of the storms which have devastated France, now a great Empire, the precious archives of the most illustrious office of Master Bordin should be preserved. And we, the undersigned clerks of the most honorable and most worshipful Master Bordin, do not hesitate to ascribe this their marvelous escape, when so many other title-deeds, charters, and letters-patent have vanished, to the protection of Saint-Geneviève, the patron saint of this office, as likewise to the reverence paid by the last of the attorneys of the old stock to all ancient use and custom. And whereas we know not what share to ascribe to the Lady Saint-Geneviève and what to Master Bordin in the working of

this miracle, we have resolved to go to the Church of Saint Étienne-du-Mont, there to attend a mass to be said at the altar of that saintly shepherdess who sendeth us so many lambs to fleece, and to invite our chief and master to breakfast, in the hope that he may bear the charges thereof. And to this we set our hand.

"OIGNARD, Head-Clerk.
"POIDEVIN, Second Clerk.
"PROUST, Clerk.
"BRIGNOLET, Clerk.
"DERVILLE, Clerk.
"AUGUSTEN CORET, Office Boy.

"At the office, this 10th day of November, 1806."

"At three o'clock of the afternoon of the next day, the undersigned, being the clerks of this office, record their gratitude to their very worshipful chief, who hath feasted them at the shop of one Rolland, a cook in the Rue du Hasard, on good wines of three districts, Bordeaux, Champagne, and Burgundy, and on meats of good savor, from four o'clock of the afternoon until half-past seven, with coffee, liqueurs, and ices galore. Yet hath the presence of the worshipful master hindered us from the singing of *laudes* (praises) in clerkly modes, nor hath any clerk overstepped the limits of pleasing levity, inasmuch as our worthy, worshipful, and generous master hath promised to take us his clerks to see Talma in 'Britannicus' at the Theatre Français. Long may he flourish! May heaven shed blessings on our worshipful master! May he get a good price for this his glorious office! May rich clients come to his heart's desire! May his bills of costs be paid in gold on the nail! May all our future masters be like him! May he be ever beloved of his clerks, even when he is no more."

Next came thirty-three reports in due form of the receptions

of clerks who had joined the office, distinguished by various handwritings in different shades of ink, distinct phraseology, and different signatures, and containing such laudatory accounts of the good-cheer and wines as seemed to prove that the reports were drawn up on the spot and while they were in their cups.

Finally, in the month of June, 1822, at the time when Desroches himself had taken the oaths, there was this page of business-like prose:

"I, the undersigned François-Claude-Marie Godeschal, being called by Maître Desroches to fulfill the difficult duties of head-clerk in an office where there are as yet no clients, having heard from Maître Derville, whose chambers I have quitted, of the existence of certain famous archives of Basochian banquets and Festivals famous in the Courts, I besought our worshipful master to require them of his predecessor; for it was important to recover that document, which bore the date A. D. 1786, and was the sequel to the archives, deposited with those of the Courts of Law, of which the existence was certified by MM. Terrasse and Duclos, keepers of the said archives, going back to the year 1525, and giving historical details of the highest value as to the manners and cookery of the law-clerks in those days.

"This having been granted, the office was put in possession as at this time of these evidences of the worship constantly paid by our predecessors to the *Dive Bouteille* (divine bottle) and to good-cheer.

"Whereupon, for the edification of those that come after us, and to continue the sequence of time and cup, I have invited MM. Doublet, second clerk; Vassal, third clerk; Hérisson and Grandemain, assistant clerks; Dumets, office-boy, to breakfast on Sunday next at the Red Horse (*Cheval Rouge*), on the Quai Saint-Bernard, where we will celebrate the recovery of this volume containing the charter of our guzzlings.

"On this day, Sunday, June 27th, one dozen bottles of various wines were drunk and found excellent. Noteworthy, likewise, were two melons, pies *au jus romanum*, a fillet of beef, and a toast *Agaricibus*. Mademoiselle Mariette, the illustrious sister of the head-clerk, and leading lady at the Royal Academy of Music and Dancing, having given to the clerks of this office stalls for that evening's performance, she is hereby to be remembered for her act of generosity. And it is furthermore resolved that the said clerks shall proceed in a body to return thanks to that noble damsel, and to assure her that on the occasion of her first lawsuit, if the devil involves her in one, she shall pay no more than the bare costs; to which all set their hand.

"Godeschal was proclaimed the pride of his profession and the best of good fellows. May the man who treats others so handsomely soon be treating for a business of his own!"

The document was bespattered with wine-spots and with blots and flourishes like fireworks.

To give a complete idea of the stamp of truth impressed on this great work, it will suffice to extract the report of the reception supposed to have been provided by Oscar:

"To-day, Monday, the 25th day of November, 1822, after a meeting held yesterday in the Rue de la Cerisaie, hard by the Arsenal, at the house of Madame Clapart, the mother of the new pupil, by name Oscar Husson, we, the undersigned, declare that the breakfast far surpassed our expectations. It included radishes (red and black), gherkins, anchovies, butter, and olives as introductory *hors-d'œuvres* (side-dishes); of a noble rice soup that bore witness to a mother's care, inasmuch as we recognized in it a delicious flavor of chicken; and by the courtesy of the founder of the feast we were, in fact, informed that the trimmings of a handsome cold dish prepared by Madame Clapart had been judiciously added to the stock

concocted at home with such care as is known only in private kitchens.

"*Item:* the aforementioned cold chicken, surrounded by a sea of jelly, the work of the aforenamed mother.

"*Item:* an ox-tongue, *aux tomates* (with tomatoes), on which we proved ourselves by no means au-tomata.

"*Item:* a stew of pigeons of such flavor as led us to believe that angels had watched over the pot.

"*Item:* a dish of macaroni flanked by cups of chocolate custard.

"*Item:* dessert, consisting of eleven dishes, among which, in spite of the intoxication resulting from sixteen bottles of excellent wine, we discerned the flavor of an exquisitely and superlatively delicious preserve of peaches.

"The wines of Roussillon and of the Côte du Rhône quite outdid those of Champagne and Burgundy. A bottle of Maraschino, and one of Kirsch, finally, and in spite of delicious coffee, brought us to such a pitch of œnological rapture, that one of us—namely, Master Hérisson—found himself in the Bois de Boulogne when he believed he was still on the Boulevard du Temple; and that Jacquinaut, the gutter-jumper, aged fourteen, spoke to citizens' wives of fifty-seven, taking them for women of the street; to which all set their hand.

"Now, in the statutes of our Order there is a law strictly observed, which is, that those who aspire to the benefits and honors of the profession of the law shall restrict the magnificence of their 'welcome' to the due proportion with their fortune, inasmuch as it is a matter of public notoriety that no man with a private income serves Themis, and that all clerks are kept short of cash by their fond parents; wherefore, it is with great admiration that we here record the munificence of Madame Clapart, widow after her first marriage of Monsieur Husson, the new licentiate's father, and declare that it was worthy of the cheers we gave her at dessert; to which all set their hand."

This rigmarole had already taken in three new-comers, and three real breakfasts were duly recorded in this imposing volume.

On the day when a neophyte first made his appearance in the office, the boy always laid the archives on the desk in front of his seat, and the clerks chuckled as they watched the face of the new student while he read these grotesque passages. Each in turn, *inter pocula*, had been initiated into the secret of this practical joke, and the revelation, as may be supposed, filled them with the hope of mystifying other clerks in the future.

So, now, my readers can imagine the countenances of the four clerks and the boy, when Oscar, now in his turn the practical joker, uttered the words, "Bring out the Book."

Ten minutes later, a handsome young man came in, well grown and pleasant-looking, asked for Monsieur Desroches, and gave his name at once to Godeschal.

"I am Frédéric Marest," said he, "and have come to fill the place of third clerk here."

"Monsieur Husson," said Godeschal, "show the gentleman his seat, and induct him into our ways of work."

Next morning the new clerk found the Book lying on his writing-pad; but after reading the first pages, he only laughed, gave no invitation, and put the book aside on his desk.

"Gentlemen," said he, as he was leaving at five o'clock, "I have a cousin who is managing-clerk to Maître Léopold Hannequin, the notary, and I will consult him as to what I should do to pay my footing."

"This looks badly," cried Godeschal. "Our sucking magistrate is no greenhorn."

"Oh! we will lead him a life!" said Oscar.

Next afternoon, at about two o'clock, Oscar saw a visitor come in, and recognized in Hannequin's head-clerk Georges Marest.

"Why, here is Ali Pasha's friend!" said he, in an airy tone.

"What? you here, my lord, the Ambassador?" retorted Georges, remembering Oscar.

"Oh, ho! then you are old acquaintances?" said Godeschal to Georges.

"I believe you! We played the fool in company," said Georges, "above two years ago. Yes, I left Crottat to go to Hannequin in consequence of that very affair."

"What affair?" asked Godeschal.

"Oh, a mere nothing," replied Georges, with a wink at Oscar. "We tried to make game of a peer of France, and it was he who made us look foolish. And now, I hear you want to draw my cousin."

"We do not draw anything," said Oscar with dignity. "Here is our charter." And he held out the famous volume at a page where sentence of excommunication was recorded against a refractory student, who had been fairly driven out of the office for stinginess in 1788.

"Still, I seem to smell game," said Georges, "for here is the trail," and he pointed to the farcical archives. "However, my cousin and I can afford it, and we will give you a feast such as you never had, and which will stimulate your imagination when recording it here. To-morrow, Sunday, at the Rocher de Cancale, two o'clock. And I will take you afterward to spend the evening with Madame la Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos, where we will gamble, and you will meet the élite of fashion. And so, gentlemen of the lower Court," he went on, with the arrogance of a notary, "let us have your best behavior, and carry your wine like gentlemen of the Regency."

"Hurrah!" cried the clerks like one man. "Bravo!—*Very well!—Vivat!* (bravo).—Long live the Marests!——"

"*Pontins*," added the boy (Les Marais Pontins—the Pontine Marshes).

"What is up?" asked Desroches, coming out of his private room. "Ah! you are here, Georges," said he to the visitor. "I know you, you are leading my clerks into mischief." And he went back into his own room, calling Oscar.

"Here," said he, opening his cash-box, "are five hundred francs; go to the Palace of Justice and get the judgment in the case of Vandenesse *v.* Vandenesse out of the copying-clerk's office; it must be sent in this evening if possible. I promised Simon a refresher of twenty francs; wait for the copy if it is not ready, and do not let yourself be put off. Derville is quite capable of putting a drag on our wheels if it will serve his client. Count Félix de Vandenesse is more influential than his brother the ambassador, our client. So keep your eyes open, and, if the least difficulty arises, come to me at once."

Oscar set out, determined to distinguish himself in this little skirmish, the first job that had come to him since his promotion.

When Georges and Oscar were both gone, Godeschal tried to pump the new clerk as to what jest might lie, as he felt sure, under the name of the Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos; but Frédéric carried on his cousin's joke with the coolness and gravity of a judge, and by his replies and his manner contrived to convey to all the clerks that the Marquise de las Florentinas was the widow of a Spanish grandee, whom his cousin was courting. Born in Mexico, and the daughter of a creole, this wealthy young widow was remarkable for the free-and-easy demeanor characteristic of the women of the Tropics.

"'She likes to laugh, She likes to drink, She likes to sing as we do,'" said he, quoting a famous song by Béranger. "And Georges," he went on, "is very rich; he inherited a fortune from his father, who was a widower, and who left him eighteen thousand francs a year, which, with twelve thousand left to each of us by an uncle, make an income of thirty

thousand francs. And he hopes to be Marquis de las Florentinas, for the young widow bears her title in her own right, and can confer it on her husband."

Though the clerks remained very doubtful as to the marquise, the prospect of a breakfast at the Rocher de Cancale, and of a fashionable soirée, filled them with joy. They reserved their opinion as to the Spanish lady, to judge her without appeal after having seen her.

The Marquise de las Florentinas was, in fact, neither more nor less than Mademoiselle Agathe Florentine Cabirolle, leading dancer at the Gaîté Theatre, at whose house Uncle Cardot sang "La Mère Godichon." Within a year of the very reparable loss of the late Madame Cardot, the fortunate merchant met Florentine one evening coming out of Coulon's dancing school. Dazzled by the beauty of this flower of the ballet—Florentine was then but thirteen—the retired storekeeper followed her to the Rue Pastourelle, where he had the satisfaction of learning that the future divinity of the dance owed her existence to a humble doorkeeper. The mother and daughter, transplanted within a fortnight to the Rue de Crussol, there found themselves in modest but easy circumstances. So it was to this "Patron of the Arts," to use a time-honored phrase, that the stage was indebted for the budding artist.

The generous Mæcenas almost turned their simple brains by given them mahogany furniture, curtains, carpets, and a well-fitted kitchen; he enabled them to keep a servant, and allowed them two hundred and fifty francs a month. Old Cardot, with his *ailes de pigeon*,* to them seemed an angel, and was treated as a benefactor should be. This was the golden age of the old man's passion.

For three years the singer of "La Mère Godichon" was so judicious as to keep Mademoiselle Cabirolle and her mother in this unpretentious house, close to the theatre; then,

* Pigeon-wings: style of his hair.

for love of the Terpsichorean art, he placed his protege under Vestris. And, in 1820, he was so happy as to see Florentine dance her first steps in the ballet of a spectacular melodrama called "The Ruins of Babylon." Florentine was now sixteen.

Soon after this first appearance Uncle Cardot was "an old screw," in the young lady's estimation; however, as he had tact enough to understand that a dancer at the Gaîté Theatre must keep up a position, and raised her monthly allowance to five hundred francs a month, if he was no longer an angel, he was at least a friend for life, a second father. This was the age of silver.

Between 1820 and 1823 Florentine went through the experience which must come to every ballet-dancer of nineteen or twenty. Her friends were the famous opera-singers Mariette and Tullia, Florine, and poor Coralie, so early snatched from Art, Love, and Camusot. And as little Uncle Cardot himself was now five years older, he had drifted into the indulgence of that half-fatherly affection which old men feel for the young talents they have trained, and whose successes are theirs. Beside, how and where should a man of sixty-eight have formed such another attachment as this with Florentine, who knew his ways, and at whose house he could sing "La Mère Godichon" with his friends? So the little man found himself under a half-matrimonial yoke of irresistible weight. This was the age of brass.

In the course of the five years of the ages of gold and of silver, Cardot had saved ninety thousand francs. The old man had had much experience; he foresaw that by the time he was seventy Florentine would be of age; she would probably come out on the opera stage, and, of course, expect the luxury and splendor of a leading lady. Only a few days before the evening now to be described, Cardot had spent forty-five thousand francs in establishing his Florentine in a suitable style, and had taken for her the apartment where the now

dead Coralie had been the joy of Camusot. In Paris, apartments and houses, like streets, have a destiny.

Glorying in magnificent plate, the leading lady of the Gaîté gave handsome dinners, spent three hundred francs a month on dress, never went out but in a private cabriolet, and kept a maid, a cook, and a page. What she aimed at, indeed, was a command to dance at the opera. The Cocon d'Or laid its handsomest products at the feet of its former master to please Mademoiselle Cabirolle, known as Florentine, just as, three years since, it had gratified every wish of Coralie's; but still without the knowledge of Uncle Cardot's daughter, for the father and his son-in-law had always agreed that decorum must be respected at home. Madame Camusot knew nothing of her husband's extravagance or her father's habits.

Now, after being the master for seven years, Cardot felt himself in tow of a pilot whose power of caprice was unlimited. But the unhappy old fellow was in love. Florentine alone must close his eyes, and he meant to leave her a hundred thousand francs. The age of iron had begun.

Georges Marest, handsome, young, and rich, with thirty thousand francs a year, was paying court to Florentine. Every dancer is by way of loving somebody as her protector loves her, and having a young man to escort her out walking or driving, and arrange excursions into the country. And, however disinterested, the affections of a leading lady are always a luxury, costing the happy object of her choice some little trifle. Dinners at the best restaurants, boxes at the play, carriages for driving in the environs of Paris, and choice wines lavishly consumed—for ballet-dancers live now like the athletes of antiquity.

Georges, in short, amused himself as young men do who suddenly find themselves independent of paternal discipline; and his uncle's death, almost doubling his income, enlarged his ideas. So long as he had but the eighteen thousand francs a year left him by his parents he intended to be a notary;

but, as his cousin remarked to Desroches' clerks, a man would be a noodle to start in a profession with as much money as others have when they give it up. So the retiring law-clerk was celebrating his first day of freedom by this breakfast, which was also to pay his cousin's footing.

Frédéric, more prudent than Georges, persisted in his legal career.

As a fine young fellow like Georges might very well marry a rich creole, and the Marquise de las Florentinas y Cabirolos might very well in the decline of life—as Frédéric hinted to his new companions—have preferred to marry for beauty rather than for noble birth, the clerks of Desroches' office—all belonging to impecunious families, and having no acquaintance with the fashionable world—got themselves up in their Sunday clothes, all impatience to see the Mexican Marquesa de las Florentinas y Cabirolos.

"What good-luck," said Oscar to Godeschal as he dressed in the morning, "that I should have just ordered a new coat, vest, trousers, and a pair of boots, and that my precious mother should have given me a new outfit on my promotion to be second clerk. I have six fine shirts with frills out of the dozen she gave me. We will make a good show? Oh! if only one of us could carry off the marquise from that Georges Marest!"

"A pretty thing for a clerk in Maître Desroches' office!" cried Godeschal. "Will you never be cured of your vanity —brat!"

"Oh, monsieur," said Madame Clapart, who had just come in to bring her son some ties, and heard the managing clerk's remarks, "would to God that Oscar would follow your good advice! It is what I am always saying to him, 'Imitate Monsieur Godeschal, take his advice,' is what I say."

"He is getting on, madame," said Godeschal, "but he must not often be so clumsy as he was yesterday, or he will lose his place in the master's good graces. Maître Desroches

cannot stand a man who is beaten. He sent your son on his first errand yesterday, to fetch away the copy of the judgment delivered in a will case, which two brothers, men of high rank, are fighting against each other, and Oscar allowed himself to be circumvented. The master was furious. It was all I could do to set things straight by going at six this morning to find the copying-clerk, and I made him promise to let me have the judgment in black and white by seven to-morrow morning."

"Oh, Godeschal," cried Oscar, going up to his superior and grasping his hand, "you are a true friend!"

"Yes, monsieur," said Madame Clapart, "it is a happy thing for a mother to feel that her son has such a friend as you, and you may believe that my gratitude will end only with my life. Oscar, beware of this Georges Marest; he has already been the cause of your first misfortune in life."

"How was that?" asked Godeschal.

The too-confiding mother briefly told the head-clerk the story of poor Oscar's adventure in Pierrotin's chaise.

"And I am certain," added Godeschal, "that the humbug has planned some trick on us this evening. I shall not go to the Marquise de las Florentinas. My sister needs my help in drawing up a fresh engagement, so I shall leave you at dessert. But be on your guard, Oscar. Perhaps they will make you gamble, and Desroches' office must not make a poor mouth. Here, you can stake for us both; here are a hundred francs," said the kind fellow, giving the money to Oscar, whose purse had been drained by the tailor and bootmaker. "Be careful; do not dream of playing beyond the hundred francs; do not let play or wine go to your head. By the mass! even a second clerk has a position to respect; he must not play on promissory-paper, nor overstep a due limit in anything. When a man is second clerk he must remember that he will presently be an attorney. So not to drink, not to play high, and to be moderate in all things, must be your rule of con-

duct. Above all, be in by midnight, for you must be at the Courts by seven to fetch away the copy of that judgment. There is no law against some fun, but business holds the first place."

"Do you hear, Oscar?" said Madame Clapart. "And see how indulgent Monsieur Godeschal is, and how he combines the enjoyments of youth with the demands of duty."

Madame Clapart, seeing the tailor and bootmaker waiting for Oscar, remained behind a moment with Godeschal to return the hundred francs he had just lent the boy.

"A mother's blessing be on you, monsieur, and on all you do," said she.

The mother had the supreme delight of seeing her boy well dressed; she had bought him a gold watch, purchased out of her savings, as a reward for his good conduct.

"You are on the list for the conscription next week," said she, "and as it was necessary to be prepared in case your number should be drawn, I went to see your Uncle Cardot; he is delighted at you being so high up at the age of twenty, and at your success in the examinations at the law-schools, so he has promised to find the money for a substitute. Do you not yourself feel some satisfaction in finding good conduct so well rewarded? If you still have to put up with some privations, think of the joy of being able to purchase a connection in only five years! And remember, too, dear boy, how happy you make your mother."

Oscar's face, thinned down a little by hard study, had developed into a countenance to which habits of business had given a look of gravity. He had done growing and had a beard; in short, from a boy he had become a man. His mother could not but admire him, and she kissed him fondly, saying—

"Yes, enjoy yourself, but remember Monsieur Godeschal's advice. By the way, I was forgetting: here is a present from our friend Moreau—a pocketbook."

"The very thing I want, for the chief gave me five hundred francs to pay for that confounded judgment in Vandenesse, and I did not want to leave them in my room."

"Are you carrying the money about with you?" said his mother in alarm. "Supposing you were to lose such a sum of money! Would you not do better to leave it with Monsieur Godeschal?"

"Godeschal!" cried Oscar, thinking his mother's idea admirable.

But Godeschal, like all clerks on Sunday, had his day to himself from ten o'clock, and was already gone.

When his mother had left, Oscar went out to lounge on the boulevards till it was time for the breakfast. How could he help airing those resplendent clothes, that he wore with such pride, and the satisfaction that every man will understand who began life in narrow circumstances. A neat, double-breasted, blue cashmere vest, black kerseymere trousers made with pleats, a well-fitting black coat, and a cane with a silver-gilt knob, bought out of his little savings, were the occasion of very natural pleasure to the poor boy, who remembered the clothes he had worn on the occasion of that journey to Presles, and the effect produced on his mind by Georges.

Oscar looked forward to a day of perfect bliss; he was to see the world of fashion for the first time that evening! And it must be admitted that to a lawyer's clerk starved of pleasure, who had for long been craving for a debauch, the sudden play of the senses was enough to obliterate the wise counsels of Godeschal and his mother. To the shame of the young be it said, good advice and warnings are never to seek. Apart from the morning's lecture, Oscar felt an instinctive dislike of Georges; he was humiliated in the presence of a man who had witnessed the scene in the drawing-room at Presles, when Moreau had dragged him to the count's feet.

The moral sphere has its laws; and we are always punished

if we ignore them. One, especially, the very beasts obey invariably and without delay. It is that which bids us fly from any one who has once injured us, voluntarily or involuntarily, intentionally or not. The being who has brought woe or discomfort on us is always odious. Whatever his rank, however near be the ties of affection, we must part. He is the emissary of our evil genius. Though Christian theory is opposed to such conduct, obedience to this inexorable law is essentially social and preservative. James II.'s daughter,* who sat on her father's throne, must have inflicted more than one wound on him before her usurpation. Judas must certainly have given Jesus some mortal thrust or ever he betrayed Him. There is within us a second-sight, a mind's eye, which foresees disasters; and the repugnance we feel to the fateful being is the consequence of this prophetic sense. Though religion may command us to resist it, distrust remains and its voice should be listened to.

Could Oscar, at the age of twenty, be so prudent? Alas! When, at two o'clock, Oscar went into the room of the Rocher de Cancale, where he found three guests beside his fellow-clerks—to wit, an old dragoon captain named Giroudeau; Finot, a journalist who might enable Florentine to get an engagement at the opera; and du Bruel, an author and friend of Tullia's, one of Mariette's rivals at the opera—the junior felt his hostility melt away under the first hand-shaking, the first flow of talk among young men, as they sat at a table handsomely laid for twelve. And indeed Georges was charming to Oscar.

"You are," said he, "following a diplomatic career, but in private concerns; for what is the difference between an ambassador and an attorney? Merely that which divides a nation from an individual. Ambassadors are the attorneys of a people. If I can ever be of any use to you, depend on me."

* Mary II., Queen of England.

"My word! I may tell you now," said Oscar, "you were the cause of a terrible catastrophe for me."

"Pooh!" said Georges, after listening to the history of the lad's tribulations. "It was Monsieur de Sérizy who behaved badly. His wife? I would not have her at a gift. And although the count is a minister of State and peer of France, I would not be in his red skin! He is a small-minded man, and I can afford to despise him now."

Oscar listened with pleasure to Georges' ironies on the Comte de Sérizy, for they seemed to diminish the gravity of his own fault, and he threw himself into the young man's spirit as he predicted that overthrow of the nobility of which the citizen class then had visions, to be realized in 1830.

They sat down at half-past three; dessert was not on the table before eight. Each course of dishes lasted two hours. None but law-clerks can eat so steadily! Digestions of eighteen and twenty are inexplicable to the medical faculty. The wine was worthy of Borrel, who had at that time succeeded the illustrious Balaine, the creator of the very best restaurant in Paris—and that is to say in the world—for refined and perfect cookery.

A full report of this Belshazzar's feast was drawn up at dessert, beginning with—*Inter pocula aurea restauranti, qui vulgo dicitur Rupes Cancalia:* and from this introduction the rapturous record may be imagined which was added to this Golden Book of the High Festivals of the Law.

Godeschal disappeared after signing his name, leaving the eleven feasters, prompted by the old captain of the Imperial Dragoons, to devote themselves to the wine, the liqueurs, and the toasts, over a dessert of pyramids of sweets and fruits like those of Thebes. By half-past ten the "boy" of the office was in a state which necessitated his removal; Georges packed him into a cab, gave the driver his mother's address, and paid his fare. Then the ten remaining guests, as drunk as Pitt and Dundas, talked of going on foot by the boulevards, the

night being very fine, as far as the residence of the marquise, where, at a little before midnight, they would find a brilliant company. The whole party longed to fill their lungs with fresh air; but excepting Georges, Giroudeau, Finot, and du Bruel, all accustomed to Parisian orgies, no one could walk. So Georges sent for three open carriages from a livery-stable, and took the whole party for an airing on the outer boulevards for an hour, from Montmartre to the Barrière du Trône, and back by Bercy, the quays, and the boulevards to the Rue de Vendôme.

The youngsters were still floating in the paradise of fancy to which intoxication transports boys, when their entertainer led them into Florentine's rooms. Here sat a dazzling assembly of the queens of the stage, who, at a hint, no doubt, from Frédéric, amused themselves by aping the manners of fine ladies. Ices were handed round, the chandeliers blazed with wax-lights. Tullia's footman, with those of Madame du Val-Noble and Florine, all in gaudy livery, carried round sweetmeats on silver trays. The hangings, choice products of the looms of Lyons, and looped with gold cord, dazzled the eye. The flowers of the carpet suggested a garden-bed. Costly toys and curiosities glittered on all sides. At first, and in the obfuscated state to which Georges had brought them, the clerks, and Oscar in particular, believed in the genuineness of the Marquesa de las Florentinas y Cabirolos.

On four tables set out for play gold-pieces lay in glittering heaps. In the drawing-room the women were playing at Vingt-et-un, Nathan, the famous author, holding the deal. Thus, after being carried tipsy and half-asleep along the dimly-lighted boulevards, the clerks woke to find themselves in Armida's Palace. Oscar, on being introduced by Georges to the sham marquise, stood dumfounded, not recognizing the ballet-dancer from the Gaîté in an elegant dress cut aristocratically low at the neck and richly trimmed with lace—a woman looking like a vignette in a keepsake, who received

them with an air and manners that had no parallel in the experience or the imagination of a youth so strictly bred as he had been. After he had admired all the splendor of the rooms, the beautiful women who displayed themselves and who had vied with each other in dress for this occasion—the inauguration of all this magnificence—Florentine took Oscar by the hand and led him to the table where Vingt-et-un was going on.

"Come, let me introduce you to the handsome Marquise d'Anglade, one of my friends——"

And she took the hapless Oscar up to pretty Fanny Beaupré, who, for the last two years, had filled poor Coralie's place in Camusot's affections. The young actress had just achieved a reputation in the part of a marquise in a melodrama at the Porte-Sainte-Martin, called the Famille d'Anglade, one of the successes of the day.

"Here, my dear," said Florentine, "allow me to introduce to you a charming youth who can be your partner in the game."

"Oh! that will be very nice?" replied the actress, with a fascinating smile, as she looked Oscar down from head to foot. "I am losing. We will go shares, if you like."

"I am at your orders, Madame la Marquise," said Oscar, taking a seat by her side.

"You shall stake," said she, "and I will play. You will bring me luck! There, that is my last hundred francs——" And the sham marquise took out a purse of which the rings were studded with diamonds, and produced five gold-pieces. Oscar brought out his hundred francs in five-franc pieces, already shamefaced at mingling the ignoble silver cart-wheels with the gold coin. In ten rounds the actress had lost the two hundred francs.

"Come! this is stupid!" she exclaimed. "I will take the bank. We will still be partners?" she asked of Oscar.

Fanny Beaupré rose, and the lad, who, like her, was now

the centre of attention to the whole table, dared not withdraw, saying that the devil alone was lodged in his purse. He was speechless, his tongue felt heavy and stuck to his palate.

"Lend me five hundred francs," said the actress to the dancer.

Florentine brought her five hundred francs, which she borrowed of Georges, who had just won at écarté eight times running.

"Nathan has won twelve hundred francs," said the actress to the clerk. "The dealer always wins; do not let us be made fools of," she whispered in his ear.

Every man of feeling, of imagination, of spirit, will understand that poor Oscar could not help opening his pocketbook and taking out the five-hundred-franc note. He looked at Nathan, the famous writer, who, in partnership with Florine, staked high against the dealer.

"Now then, boy, sweep it in!" cried Fanny Beaupré, signing to Oscar to take up two hundred francs that Florine and Nathan had lost.

The actress did not spare the losers her banter and jests. She enlivened the game by remarks of a character which Oscar thought strange; but delight stifled these reflections, for the two first deals brought in winnings of two thousand francs. Oscar longed to be suddenly taken ill and to fly, leaving his partner to her fate, but honor forbade it. Three more deals had carried away the profits. Oscar felt the cold sweat down his spine; he was quite sobered now. The two last rounds absorbed a thousand francs staked by the partners; Oscar felt thirsty and drank off three glasses of iced punch.

The actress led him into an adjoining room, talking nonsense to divert him; but the sense of his error so completely overwhelmed Oscar, to whom Desroches' face appeared like a vision in a dream, that he sank on to a splendid ottoman in a dark corner and hid his face in his handkerchief. He was

fairly crying. Florentine detected him in this attitude, too sincere not to strike an actress; she hurried up to Oscar, pulled away the handkerchief, and seeing his tears led him into a boudoir.

"What is the matter, my boy?" said she.

To this voice, these words, this tone, Oscar, recognizing the motherliness of a courtesan's kindness, replied—

"I have lost five hundred francs that my master gave me to pay to-morrow morning for a judgment; there is nothing for it but to throw myself into the river; I am disgraced."

"How can you be so silly?" cried Florentine. "Stay where you are, I will bring you a thousand francs. Try to recover it all, but only risk five hundred francs, so as to keep your chief's money. Georges plays a first-rate game at écarté; bet on him."

Oscar, in his dreadful position, accepted the offer of the mistress of the house.

"Ah!" thought he, "none but a marquise would be capable of such an action. Beautiful, noble, and immensely rich! Georges is a lucky dog!"

He received a thousand francs in gold from the hands of Florentine, and went to bet on the man who had played him this trick. The punters were pleased at the arrival of a new man, for they all, with the instinct of gamblers, went over to the side of Giroudeau, the old Imperial officer.

"Gentlemen," said Georges, "you will be punished for your defection, for I am in luck. Come, Oscar; we will do for them."

But Georges and his backer lost five games running. Having thrown away his thousand francs, Oscar, carried away by the gambling fever, insisted on holding the cards. As a result of the luck that often favors a beginner, he won; but Georges puzzled him with advice; he told him how to discard, and frequently snatched his hand from him, so that the conflict of two wills, two minds, spoiled the run of luck. In

short, by three in the morning, after many turns of fortune, and unhoped-for recoveries, still drinking punch, Oscar found himself possessed of no more than a hundred francs. He rose from the table, his brain heavy and dizzy, walked a few steps, and dropped on to a sofa in the boudoir, his eyes sealed in leaden slumbers.

"Mariette," said Fanny Beaupré to Godeschal's sister, who had come in at about two in the morning, "will you dine here to-morrow? My Camusot will be here and Father Cardot; we will make them mad."

"How?" cried Florentine. "My old man has not sent me word."

"He will be here this morning to tell you that he proposes to sing 'la Mère Godichon,'" replied Fanny Beaupré. "He must give a house-warming too, poor man."

"The devil take him and his orgies!" exclaimed Florentine. "He and his son-in-law are worse than magistrates or managers. After all, Mariette, you dine well here," she went on. "Cardot orders everything from Chevet. Bring your Duc de Maufrigneuse; we will have fun, and make them all dance."

Oscar, who caught the names of Cardot and Camusot, made an effort to rouse himself; but he could only mutter a word or two which were not heard, and fell back on the silk cushion.

"You are provided, I see," said Fanny Beaupré to Florentine, with a laugh.

"Ah! poor boy, he is drunk with punch and despair. He has lost some money his master had intrusted to him for some office business. He was going to kill himself, so I lent him a thousand francs, of which those robbers Finot and Giroudeau have fleeced him. Poor innocent!"

"But we must wake him," said Mariette. "My brother will stand no nonsense, nor his master either."

"Well, wake him if you can, and get him away," said

Florentine, going back into the drawing-room to take leave of those who were not gone.

The party then took to dancing—character dances, as they were called; and at daybreak Florentine went to bed very tired, having forgotten Oscar, whom nobody, in fact, remembered, and who was still sleeping soundly.

At about eleven o'clock a terrible sound awoke the lad, who recognized his Uncle Cardot's voice, and thought he might get out of the scrape by pretending still to be asleep, so he hid his face in the handsome, yellow velvet cushions on which he had passed the night.

"Really, my little Florentine," the old man was saying, "it is neither good nor nice of you. You were dancing last night in the Ruines, and then spent the night in an orgy. Why, it is simply destruction to your freshness, not to say that it is really ungrateful of you to inaugurate this splendid apartment without me, with strangers, without my knowing it —who knows what may have happened!"

"You old monster!" cried Florentine. "Have you not a key to come in whenever you like? We danced till half-past five, and you are so cruel as to wake me at eleven."

"Half-past eleven, Titine," said the old man humbly. "I got up early to order a dinner from Chevet worthy of an archbishop. How they have spoilt the carpets! Whom had you here?"

"You ought to make no complaints, for Fanny Beaupré told me that you and Camusot were coming, so I have asked the others to meet you—Tullia, du Bruel, Mariette, the Duc de Maufrigneuse, Florine, and Nathan. So you will have the five loveliest women who ever stood behind the footlights, and we will dance you a *pas de Zéphire.*"

"It is killing work to lead such a life!" cried old Cardot. "What a heap of broken glasses, what destruction! The anteroom is a scene of horror!"

At this moment the amiable old man stood speechless and

fascinated, like a bird under the gaze of a reptile. He caught sight of the outline of a young figure clothed in black cloth.

"Heyday! Mademoiselle Cabirolle!" said he at last.

"Well, what now?" said she.

The girl's eyes followed the direction of Père Cardot's gaze, and when she saw the youth still there, she burst into a fit of crazy laughter, which not only struck the old man dumb, but compelled Oscar to look round. Florentine pulled him up by the arm, and half choked with laughter as she saw the hang-dog look of the uncle and nephew.

"You here, nephew?"

"Oh ho! He is your nephew?" cried Florentine, laughing more than ever. "You never mentioned this nephew of yours. Then Mariette did not take you home?" said she to Oscar, who sat petrified. "What is to become of the poor boy?"

"Whatever he pleases!" replied old Cardot drily and turning to the door to go away.

"One minute, Papa Cardot; you will have to help your nephew out of the mess he has gotten into by my fault, for he has gambled away his master's money, five hundred francs, beside a thousand francs of mine which I lent him to get it back again."

"Wretched boy, have you lost fifteen hundred francs at play—at your age?"

"Oh! uncle, uncle!" cried the unhappy Oscar, cast by these words into the depths of horror at his position. He fell on his knees at his uncle's feet with clasped hands. "It is twelve o'clock; I am lost, disgraced. Monsieur Desroches will show no mercy—there was an important business, a matter on which he prides himself—I was to have gone this morning to fetch away the copy of the judgment in Vandenesse *v.* Vandenesse! What has happened? What will become of me? Save me for my father's sake—for my aunt's. Come with me to Maître Desroches and explain; find some excuse——"

The words came out in gasps, between sobs and tears that might have softened the Sphinx in the desert of Luxor.

"Now, old skinflint," cried the dancer in tears, "can you leave your own nephew to disgrace, the son of the man to whom you owe your fortune, since he is Oscar Husson? Save him, I say, or Titine refuses to own you as her milord!"

"But how came he here?" asked the old man.

"What! so as to forget the hour when he should have gone the errand he speaks of? Don't you see, he got drunk and dropped there, dead-tired and sleepy? Georges and his cousin Frédéric treated Desroches' clerks yesterday at the Rocher de Cancale."

Cardot looked at her, still doubtful.

"Come, now, old baboon, if it were anything more should I not have hidden him more effectually?" cried she.

"Here, then, take the five hundred francs, you scamp!" said Cardot to his nephew. "That is all you will ever have of me. Go and make matters up with your master if you can. I will repay the thousand francs mademoiselle lent you, but never let me hear your name again."

Oscar fled, not wishing to hear more; but when he was in the street he did not know where to go.

The chance which ruins men, and the chance that serves them, seemed to be playing against each other on equal terms for Oscar that dreadful morning; but he was destined to fail with a master who, when he made up his mind, never changed it.

Mariette, on returning home, horrified at what might befall her brother's charge, wrote a line to Godeschal, inclosing a five-hundred-franc note, and telling her brother of Oscar's drunken bout and disasters. The good woman, ere she went to sleep, instructed her maid to take this letter to Desroches' chambers before seven. Godeschal, on his part, waking at six, found no Oscar. He at once guessed what had happened.

He took five hundred francs out of his savings and hurried off to the copying-clerk to fetch the judgment, so as to lay it before Desroches for signature in his office at eight. Desroches, who always rose at four, came to his room at seven o'clock. Mariette's maid, not finding her mistress' brother in his attic, went down to the office and was there met by Desroches, to whom she very naturally gave the note.

"Is it a matter of business?" asked the lawyer. "I am Maître Desroches."

"You can see, monsieur," said the woman.

Desroches opened the letter and read it. On finding the five-hundred-franc note he went back into his own room, furious with his second clerk. Then at half-past seven he heard Godeschal dictating a report on the judgment to another clerk, and a few minutes later Godeschal came into the room in triumph.

"Was it Oscar Husson who went to Simon this morning?" asked Desroches.

"Yes, monsieur," replied Godeschal.

"Who gave him the money?" said the lawyer.

"You," said Godeschal, "on Saturday."

"It rains five-hundred-franc notes, it would seem!" cried Desroches. "Look here, Godeschal, you are a good fellow, but that little wretch Husson does not deserve your generosity. I hate a fool, but yet more I hate people who will go wrong in spite of the care of those who are kind to them." He gave Godeschal Mariette's note and the five hundred francs she had sent. "Forgive me for opening it, but the maid said it was a matter of business. You must get rid of Oscar."

"What trouble I have had with that poor little ne'er-do-well!" said Godeschal. "That scoundrel Georges Marest is his evil genius; he must avoid him like the plague, for I do not know what might happen if they met a third time."

"How is that?" asked Desroches, and Godschal sketched the story of the practical joking on the journey to Presles.

"To be sure," said the lawyer. "I remember Joseph Bridau told me something about that at the time. It was to that meeting that we owed the Comte de Sérizy's interest in Bridau's brother."

At this moment Moreau came in, for this suit over the Vandenesse property was an important affair to him. The marquis wanted to sell the Vandenesse estate in lots, and his brother opposed such a proceeding.

Thus the land agent was the recipient of the justifiable complaints and sinister prophecies fulminated by Desroches as against his second clerk; and the unhappy boy's most friendly protector was forced to the conclusion that Oscar's vanity was incorrigible.

"Make a pleader of him," said Desroches; "he only has to pass his final; in that branch of the law his faults may prove to be useful qualities, for conceit spurs the tongue of half of our advocates."

As it happened, Clapart was at this time out of health, and nursed by his wife, a painful and thankless task. The man worried the poor soul, who had hitherto never known how odious the nagging and spiteful taunts can be in which a half-imbecile creature gives vent to his irritation when poverty drives him into a sort of cunning rage. Delighted to have a sharp dagger that he could drive home to her motherly heart, he had suspected the fears for the future which were suggested to the hapless woman by Oscar's conduct and faults. In fact, when a mother has received such a blow as she had felt from the adventure at Presles she lives in perpetual alarm; and by the way in which Madame Clapart cried up Oscar whenever he achieved a success, Clapart understood all her secret fears and would stir them up on the slightest pretext.

"Well, well, Oscar is getting on better than I expected of him; I always said his journey to Presles was only a blunder due to inexperience. Where is the young man who never made a mistake? Poor, boy, he is heroic in his endurance

of the privations he would never have known if his father had lived. God grant he may control his passions!" and so on.

So, while so many disasters were crowding on each other in the Rue de Vendôme and the Rue de Béthisy, Clapart, sitting by the fire wrapped in a shabby dressing-gown, was watching his wife, who was busy cooking over the bedroom fire some soup, Clapart's herb tea, and her own breakfast.

"Good heavens! I wish I knew how things fell out yesterday. Oscar was to breakfast at the Rocher de Cancale, and spend the evening with some marquise——"

"Oh! don't be in a hurry; sooner or later murder will out," retorted her husband. "Do you believe in the marquise? Go on; a boy who has his five senses and a love of extravagance—as Oscar has, after all—can find marquises on every bush costing their weight in gold! He will come home some day loaded with debt——"

"You don't know how to be cruel enough, and to drive me to despair!" exclaimed Madame Clapart. "You complained that my son ate up all your salary, and he never cost you a sou. For two years you have not had a fault to find with Oscar, and now he is second clerk, his uncle and Monsieur Moreau provide him with everything, and he has eight hundred francs a year of his own earning. If we have bread in our old age, we shall owe it to that dear boy. You really are too unjust."

"You consider my foresight an injustice?" said the sick man sourly.

There came at this moment a sharp ring at the bell. Madame Clapart ran to open the door, and then remained in the outer room, talking to Moreau, who had come himself to soften the blow that the news of Oscar's levity must be to his poor mother.

"What! He lost his master's money?" cried Madame Clapart in tears.

"Aha! what did I tell you?" said Clapart, who appeared like a spectre in the doorway of the drawing-room, to which he had shuffled across under the prompting of overweening curiosity.

"But what is to be done with him?" said his wife, whose distress left her insensible to this stab.

"Well, if he bore my name," said Moreau, "I should calmly allow him to be drawn for the conscription, and if he should be called to serve, I would not pay for a substitute. This is the second time that sheer vanity has brought him into mischief. Well, vanity may lead him to some brilliant action, which will win him promotion as a soldier. Six years' service will at any rate add a little weight to his feather-brain, and as he has only his final examination to pass, he will not do so badly if he finds himself a pleader at six-and-twenty, if he chooses to go to the bar after paying the blood-tax, as they say. This time, at any rate, he will have had his punishment, he will gain experience and acquire habits of subordination. He will have served his apprenticeship to life before serving it in the Law Courts."

"If that is the sentence you would pronounce on a son," said Madame Clapart, "I see that a father's heart is very unlike a mother's. My poor Oscar—a soldier——?"

"Would you rather see him jump head-foremost into the Seine after doing something to disgrace himself? He can never now be an attorney; do you think he is fitted yet to be an advocate? While waiting till he reaches years of discretion, what will he become? A thorough scamp; military discipline will at any rate preserve him from that."

"Could he not go into another office? His Uncle Cardot would certainly pay for a substitute—and Oscar will dedicate his thesis to him——"

The clatter of a cab, in which was piled all Oscar's personal property, announced the wretched lad's return, and in a few minutes he made his appearance.

"So here you are, Master Joli-Cœur!"* exclaimed Clapart.

Oscar kissed his mother, and held out a hand to Monsieur Moreau, which that gentleman would not take. Oscar answered this contempt with a look to which reproach lent a firmness new to the bystanders.

"Listen, Monsieur Clapart," said the boy, so suddenly grown to be a man; "you worry my poor mother beyond endurance, and you have a right to do so; she is your wife—for her sins. But it is different with me. In a few months I shall be of age, and you have no power over me even while I am a minor. I have never asked you for anything. Thanks to this gentleman, I have never cost you one sou, and I owe you no sort of gratitude; so, have the goodness to leave me in peace."

Clapart, startled by this apostrophe, went back to his armchair by the fire. The reasoning of the lawyer's clerk and the suppressed fury of a young man of twenty, who had just had a sharp lecture from his friend Godeschal, had reduced the sick man's imbecility to silence, once and for all.

"An error into which you would have been led quite as easily as I, at my age," said Oscar to Moreau, "made me commit a fault which Desroches thinks serious, but which is really trivial enough; I am far more vexed with myself for having taken Florentine of the Gaîté Theatre, for a marquise, and actresses for women of rank, than for having lost fifteen hundred francs at a little orgy where everybody, even Godeschal, was somewhat screwed. This time, at any rate, I have hurt no one but myself. I am thoroughly cured. If you will help me, Monsieur Moreau, I swear to you that in the course of the six years during which I must remain a clerk before I can practice——"

"Stop a bit!" said Moreau. "I have three children; I can make no promises."

* Pretty heart.

"Well, well," said Madame Clapart, with a reproachful look at Moreau, "your Uncle Cardot——"

"No more an Uncle Cardot for me," replied Oscar, and he related the adventure of the Rue de Vendôme.

Madame Clapart, feeling her knees give way under the weight of her body, dropped on one of the dining-room chairs as if a thunderbolt had fallen.

"Every possible misfortune at once!" said she, and fainted away.

Moreau lifted the poor woman in his arms, and carried her to her bed. Oscar stood motionless and speechless.

"There is nothing for you but to serve as a soldier," said the estate agent, coming back again. "That idiot Clapart will not last three months longer, it seems to me; your mother will not have a sou in the world; ought I not rather to keep for her the little money I can spare? This was what I could not say to you in her presence. As a soldier, you will earn your bread, and you may meditate on what life is to the penniless."

"I might draw a lucky number," said Oscar.

"And if you do? Your mother has been a very good mother to you. She gave you an education, she started you in a good way; you have lost it; what could you do now? Without money, a man is helpless, as you now know, and you are not the man to begin all over again by pulling off your coat and putting on a workman's or artisan's blouse. And then your mother worships you. Do you want to kill her? For she would die of seeing you fallen so low."

Oscar sat down, and could no longer control his tears, which flowed freely. He understood now a form of appeal which had been perfectly incomprehensible at the time of his first error.

"Penniless folk ought to be perfect!" said Moreau to himself, not appreciating how deeply true this cruel verdict was.

"My fate will soon be decided," said Oscar; "the num-

bers are drawn the day after to-morrow. Between this and then I will come to some decision."

Moreau, deeply grieved in spite of his austerity, left the family in the Rue de la Cerisaie to their despair.

Three days after Oscar drew Number 27. To help the poor lad, the ex-steward of Presles found courage enough to go to the Comte de Sérizy and beg his interest to get Oscar into the cavalry. As it happened, the count's son, having come out well at his last examination on leaving the Polytechnic, had been passed by favor, with the rank of sub-lieutenant, into the cavalry regiment commanded by the Duc de Maufrigneuse. And so, in the midst of his fall, Oscar had the small piece of luck of being enlisted in this fine regiment at the Comte de Sérizy's recommendation, with the promise of promotion to be quartermaster in a year's time.

Thus chance placed the lawyer's clerk under the command of Monsieur de Sérizy's son.

After some days of pining, Madame Clapart, who was deeply stricken by all these misfortunes, gave herself up to the remorse which is apt to come over mothers whose conduct has not been blameless, and who, as they grow old, are led to repent. She thought of herself as one accursed. She ascribed the miseries of her second marriage and all her son's ill-fortune to the vengeance of God, who was punishing her in expiation of the sins and pleasures of her youth. This idea soon became a conviction. The poor soul went to confession, for the first time in forty years, to the vicar of the church of Saint-Paul, the Abbé Gaudron, who plunged her into the practices of religion.

But a spirit so crushed and so loving as Madame Clapart's could not fail to become simply pious. The Aspasia of the Directoire yearned to atone for her sins that she might bring the blessing of God down on the head of her beloved Oscar, and before long she had given herself up to the most earnest

practices of devotion and works of piety. She believed that she had earned the favor of heaven when she had succeeded in saving Monsieur Clapart, who, thanks to her care, lived to torment her; but she persisted in seeing in the tyranny of this half-witted old man the trials inflicted by Him who loves while He chastens us.

Oscar's conduct meanwhile was so satisfactory that in 1830 he was first quartermaster of the company under the Vicomte de Sérizy, equivalent in rank to a sub-lieutenant of the line, as the Duc de Maufrigneuse's regiment was attached to the King's Guards. Oscar Husson was now five-and-twenty. As the regiments of Guards were always quartered in Paris, or within thirty leagues of the capital, he could see his mother from time to time and confide his sorrows to her, for he was clear-sighted enough to perceive that he could never rise to be an officer. At that time cavalry officers were almost always chosen from among the younger sons of the nobility, and men without the distinguishing *de* got on but slowly. Oscar's whole ambition was to get out of the Guards and enter some cavalry regiment of the line as a sub-lieutenant; and in the month of February, 1830, Madame Clapart, through the interest of the Abbé Gaudron, now at the head of his parish, gained the favor of the Dauphiness, which secured Oscar's promotion.

Although the ambitious young soldier professed ardent devotion to the Bourbons, he was at heart a liberal. In the struggle, in 1830, he took the side of the people. This defection, which proved to be important by reason of the way in which it acted, drew public attention to Oscar Husson. In the moment of triumph, in the month of August, Oscar, promoted to be lieutenant, received the cross of the Legion of Honor, and succeeded in obtaining the post of aide-de-camp to La Fayette, who made him captain in 1832. When this devotee to "the best of all Republics" was deprived of his command of the National Guard, Oscar Husson, whose devo-

tion to the new royal family was almost fanaticism, was sent as major with a regiment to Africa on the occasion of the first expedition undertaken by the prince. The Vicomte de Sérizy was now lieutenant-colonel of that regiment. At the fight of the Macta, where the Arabs remained masters of the field, Monsieur de Sérizy was left wounded under his dead horse. Oscar addressed his company.

"It is riding to our death," said he, "but we cannot desert our colonel."

He was the first to charge the enemy, and his men, quite electrified, followed. The Arabs, in the shock of surprise at this furious and unexpected attack, allowed Oscar to pick up his colonel, whom he took on his horse and rode off at a pelting gallop, though in this act, carried out in the midst of furious fighting, he had two cuts from a yataghan on the left arm.

Oscar's valiant conduct was rewarded by the cross of an officer of the Legion of Honor, and promotion to the rank of lieutenant-colonel. He nursed the Vicomte de Sérizy with devoted affection; the Comtesse de Sérizy joined her son and carried him to Toulon, where, as all the world knows, he died of his wounds. Madame de Sérizy did not part her son from the man who, after rescuing him from the Arabs, had cared for him with such unfailing devotion.

Oscar himself was so severely wounded that the surgeons called in by the countess to attend her son pronounced amputation necessary. The count forgave Oscar his follies on the occasion of the journey to Presles, and even regarded himself as the young man's debtor when he had buried his only surviving son in the chapel of the Château de Sérizy.

A long time after the battle of the Macta, an old lady dressed in black, leaning on the arm of a man of thirty-four, at once recognizable as a retired officer by the loss of one arm and the rosette of the Legion of Honor at his button-hole,

was to be seen at eight o'clock one morning, waiting under the gateway of the Silver Lion, Rue du Faubourg, Saint-Denis, till the diligence should be ready to start.

Pierrotin, the manager of the coach services of the Valley of the Oise, passing by Saint-Leu-Taverny and l'Isle-Adam, as far as Beaumont, would hardly have recognized in this bronzed officer that little Oscar Husson whom he had once driven to Presles. Madame Clapart, a widow at last, was quite as unrecognizable as her son. Clapart, one of the victims of Fieschi's machine, had done his wife a better turn by the manner of his death than he had ever done her in his life. Of course, Clapart, the idler, the lounger, had taken up a place on *his* boulevard to see *his* legion reviewed. Thus the poor bigot had found her name put down by the government for a pension of fifteen hundred francs a year by the decree which indemnified the victims of this infernal machine.

The vehicle, to which four dappled-gray horses were now being harnessed—steeds worthy of the *Messageries royales*—was in four divisions, the *coupé*, the *intérieur*, the *rotonde* behind, and the *imperiale* at top. It was identically the same as the diligences called *Gondoles*, which, in our day, still maintain a rivalry on the Versailles road with two lines of railway. Strong and light, well painted and clean, lined with good blue cloth, furnished with blinds of arabesque design and red morocco cushions, the *Hirondelle de l' Oise* (Swallow of the Oise) could carry nineteen travelers. Pierrotin, though he was by this time fifty-six, was little changed. He still wore a blouse over his black coat, and still smoked his short pipe, as he watched two porters in stable-livery piling numerous packages on the roof of his coach.

"Have you taken seats?" he asked of Madame Clapart and Oscar, looking at them as if he were searching his memory for some association of ideas.

"Yes, two inside places, name of Bellejambe, my servant,"

said Oscar. "He was to take them when he left the house last evening."

"Oh, then monsieur is the new collector at Beaumont," said Pierrotin. "You are going down to take the place of Monsieur Margueron's nephew?"

"Yes," replied Oscar, pressing his mother's arm as a hint to her to say nothing. For now he in his turn wished to remain unknown for a time.

At this instant Oscar was startled by recognizing Georges' voice calling from the street—

"Have you a seat left, Pierrotin?"

"It strikes me that you might say Monsieur Pierrotin without breaking your jaw," said the coach-owner angrily.

But for the tone of his voice Oscar could never have recognized the practical joker who had twice brought him such ill-luck. Georges, almost bald, had but three or four locks of hair left above his ears, and carefully combed up to disguise his bald crown as far as possible. A development of fat in the wrong place, a bulbous stomach, had spoiled the elegant figure of the once handsome young man. Almost vulgar in shape and mien, Georges showed the traces of disaster in love, and of a life of constant debauchery, in a spotty red complexion, and thickened, vinous features. His eyes had lost the sparkle and eagerness of youth, which can only be preserved by decorous and studious habits.

Georges, dressed with evident indifference to his appearance, wore a pair of trousers with straps, but shabby, and of a style that demanded patent-leather shoes; those he wore, thick and badly polished, were at least three-quarters of a year old, which is in Paris as much as three years anywhere else. A shabby vest, a tie elaborately knotted, though it was but an old bandana, betrayed the covert penury to which a decayed dandy may be reduced. To crown all, at this early hour of the day Georges wore a dress-coat instead of a morning-coat, the symptom of positive poverty. This coat, which must

have danced at many a ball, had fallen, like its owner, from the opulence it once represented to the duties of daily scrub. The seams of the black cloth showed white ridges, the collar was greasy, and wear had pinked out the cuffs into a dog-tooth edge. Still, Georges was bold enough to invite attention by wearing lemon-colored gloves—rather dirty, to be sure, and on one finger the outline of a large ring was visible in black.

Round his tie, of which the ends were slipped through a pretentious gold ring, twined a brown silk chain in imitation of hair, ending no doubt in a watch. His hat, though stuck on with an air, showed more evidently than all these other symptoms the poverty of a man who never has sixteen francs to spend at the hatter's when he lives from hand to mouth. Florentine's lover of yore flourished a cane with a chased handle, silver-gilt, but horribly dented. His blue trousers, tartan waistcoat, sky-blue tie, and red-striped cotton shirt bore witness, in spite of so much squalor, to such a passion for show that the contrast was not merely laughable, but a lesson.

"And this is Georges?" said Oscar to himself. "A man I left in possession of thirty thousand francs a year!"

"Has Monsieur *de* Pierrotin still a vacant seat in his coupé?" asked Georges ironically.

"No, my coupé is taken by a peer of France, Monsieur Moreau's son-in-law, Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, with his wife and his mother-in-law. I have only a seat in the body of the coach."

"The deuce! It would seem that under every form of government peers of France travel in Pierrotin's conveyances! I will take the seat in the *intérieur*," said Georges, with a reminiscence of the journey with Monsieur de Sérizy.

He turned to stare at Oscar and the widow, but recognized neither mother nor son. Oscar was deeply tanned by the African sun; he had a very thick mustache and whiskers; his

hollow cheeks and marked features were in harmony with his military deportment. The officer's rosette, the loss of an arm, the plain dark dress, would all have been enough to mislead Georges' memory, if indeed he remembered his former victim. As to Madame Clapart, whom he had scarcely seen on the former occasion, ten years spent in pious exercises of the severest kind had absolutely transformed her. No one could have imagined that this sort of Gray Sister hid one of the Aspasias of 1797.

A huge old man, plainly but very comfortably dressed, in whom Oscar recognized old Léger, came up slowly and heavily; he nodded familiarly to Pierrotin, who seemed to regard him with the respect due in all countries to millionaires.

"Heh! why, it is Father Léger! more ponderous than ever!" cried Georges.

"Whom have I the honor of addressing?" asked the farmer very drily.

"What! Don't you remember Colonel Georges, Ali Pasha's friend? We traveled this road together, once upon a time, with the Comte de Sérizy, who preserved his incognito."

One of the commonest follies of persons who have come down in the world is insisting on recognizing people, and on being recognized.

"You are very much changed," said the old farmer, now worth two millions of francs.

"Everything changes," said Georges. "Look at the Silver Lion inn and at Pierrotin's coach, and see if they are the same as they were fourteen years since."

"Pierrotin is now owner of all the coaches that serve the Oise Valley, and has very good vehicles," said M. Léger. "He is a citizen now of Beaumont, and keeps a hotel there where his coaches put up; he has a wife and daughter who know their business——"

An old man of about seventy came out of the inn and

joined the group of travelers who were waiting to be told to get in.

"Come along, Papa Reybert!" said Léger. "We have no one to wait for now but your great man."

"Here he is," said the land steward of Presles, turning to Joseph Bridau.

Neither Oscar nor Georges would have recognized the famous painter, for his face was the strangely worn countenance now so well known, and his manner was marked by the confidence born of success. His black overcoat displayed the ribbon of the Legion of Honor. His dress, which was careful in all points, showed that he was on his way to some country fête.

At this moment a clerk with a paper in his hand bustled out of an office constructed at one end of the old kitchen of the Silver Lion, and stood in front of the still unoccupied *coupé*.

"Monsieur and Madame de Canalis, three places!" he called out; then, coming to the *intérieur*, he said, "Monsieur Bellejambe, two places; Monsieur Reybert, three; Monsieur—your name?" added he to Georges.

"Georges Marest," replied the fallen hero in an undertone.

The clerk then went to the *rotonde* (the omnibus at the back of the old French diligence), round which stood a little crowd of nurses, country-folk, and small storekeepers, taking leave of each other. After packing the six travelers, the clerk called the names of four youths who clambered up on to the seat on the *imperiale*, and then said "Right behind!" as the signal for starting.

Pierrotin took his place by the driver, a young man in a blouse, who in his turn said, "Get up," to his horses.

The coach, set in motion by four horses purchased at Roye, was pulled up the hill of the Faubourg Saint-Denis at a gentle trot, but having once gained the level above Saint Lau-

rent, it spun along like a mail-coach as far as Saint-Denis in forty minutes. They did not stop at the inn famous for cheese-cakes, but turned off to the left of Saint-Denis, down the valley of Montmorency.

It was here, as they turned, that Georges broke the silence which had been kept so far by the travelers who were studying each other.

"We keep rather better time than we did fifteen years ago," said he, taking out a silver watch. "Eh! Father Léger?" he asked.

"People are so condescending as to address me as Monsieur Léger," retorted the millionaire.

"Why, this is our blusterer of my first journey to Presles," exclaimed Joseph Bridau. "Well, and have you been fighting new campaigns in Asia, Africa, and America?" asked the great painter.

"By Jupiter! I helped in the Revolution of July, and that was enough, for it ruined me."

"Oho! you helped in the Revolution of July, did you?" said Bridau. "I am not surprised, for I never could believe what I was told, that it made itself."

"How strangely meetings come about," said Monsieur Léger, turning to Reybert. "Here, Papa Reybert, you see the notary's clerk to whom you owe indirectly your place as steward of the estates of Sérizy."

"But we miss Mistigris, now so famous as Léon de Lora," said Joseph Bridau, "and the little fellow who was such a fool as to tell the count all about his skin complaints—which he has cured at last—and his wife, from whom he has parted to die in peace."

"Monsieur le Comte is missing too," said Reybert.

"Oh!" said Bridau sadly, "I am afraid that the last expedition he will ever make will be to l'Isle-Adam, to be present at my wedding."

"He still drives out in the park," remarked old Reybert.

"Does his wife come often to see him?" asked Léger.

"Once a month," replied old Reybert. "She still prefers Paris; she arranged the marriage of her favorite niece, Mademoiselle du Rouvre, to a very rich young Pole, Count Laginski, in September last——"

"And who will inherit Monsieur de Sérizy's property?" asked Madame Clapart.

"His wife. She will bury him," replied Georges. "The countess is still handsome for a woman of fifty-four, still very elegant, and at a distance quite illusory——"

"Elusive, you mean? She will always elude you," Léger put in, wishing, perhaps, to turn the tables on the man who had mystified him.

"I respect her," said Georges in reply. "But, by the way, what became of that steward who was so abruptly dismissed in those days?"

"Moreau?" said Léger. "He is Deputy now for Seine et Oise."

"Oh, yes, the famous *centre* Moreau (of l'Oise)?"* said Georges.

"Yes," replied Léger. "*Monsieur* Moreau (of l'Oise). He helped rather more than you in the Revolution of July, and he has lately bought the splendid estate of Pointel, between Presles and Beaumont."

"What, close to the place he managed, and so near his old master! That is in very bad taste," cried Georges.

"Do not talk so loud," said Monsieur de Reybert, "for Madame Moreau and her daughter, the Baroness de Canalis, and her son-in-law, the late minister, are in the *coupé*."

"What fortune did he give her that the great orator would marry his daughter?"

"Well, somewhere about two millions," said Léger.

"He had a pretty taste in millions," said Georges, smiling,

* Moreau (pronounced mo-rō) means extremely well—the play is on the *centre* O in "of l'Oise."

and in an undertone, "He began feathering his nest at Presles——"

"Say no more about Monsieur Moreau," exclaimed Oscar. "It seems to me that you might have learned to hold your tongue in a public conveyance!"

Joseph Bridau looked for a few seconds at the one-armed officer, and then said—

"Monsieur is not an ambassador, but his rosette shows that he has risen in the world; and nobly too, for my brother and General Giroudeau have often mentioned you in their dispatches——"

"Oscar Husson!" exclaimed Georges Marest. "On my honor, but for your voice, I certainly should never have recognized you."

"Ah! is this the gentleman who so bravely carried off the Vicomte Jules de Sérizy from the Arabs?" asked Reybert, "and to whom Monsieur le Comte has given the collectorship at Beaumont pending his appointment to Pontoise?"

"Yes, monsieur," said Oscar.

"Well, then," said the painter, "I hope, monsieur, that you will do me the pleasure of being present at my marriage, at l'Isle-Adam."

"Whom are you marrying?" asked Oscar.

"Mademoiselle Léger, Monsieur de Reybert's granddaughter. Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy was good enough to arrange the matter for me. I owe him much as an artist, and he was anxious to establish my fortune before his death—I had scarcely thought of it——"

"Then Père Léger married?" said Georges.

"My daughter," said Monsieur de Reybert, "and without any money."

"And he has children?"

"One daughter. Quite enough for a widower who had no children," said Père Lèger. "And, like my partner Moreau, I shall have a famous man for my son-in-law."

"So you still live at l'Isle-Adam?" said Georges to Monsieur Léger, almost respectfully.

"Yes; I purchased Cassan."

"Well, I am happy in having chosen this particular day for doing the Oise Valley," said Georges, "for you may do me a service, gentlemen."

"In what way?" asked Léger.

"Well, thus," said Georges. "I am employed by the Society of *l'Espérance*,* which has just been incorporated, and its by-laws approved by letters-patent from the King. This institution is, in ten years, to give marriage portions to girls and annuities to old people; it will pay for the education of children; in short, it takes care of everybody——"

"So I should think!" said old Léger, laughing. "In short, you are an insurance agent."

"No, monsieur, I am inspector-general, instructed to establish agencies and correspondents with the company throughout France; I am acting only till the agents are appointed; for it is a delicate and difficult matter to find honest men——"

"But how did you lose your thirty thousand francs a year?" asked Oscar.

"As you lost your arm!" the ex-notary's clerk replied sharply to the ex-attorney's clerk.

"Then you invested your fortune in some brilliant deed?" said Oscar, with somewhat bitter irony.

"By Jupiter! my investments are a sore subject. I have more deeds than enough."

They had reached Saint-Leu-Taverny, where the travelers got out while they changed horses. Oscar admired the briskness with which Pierrotin unbuckled the straps of the whiffletree, while his driver took out the leaders.

"Poor Pierrotin!" thought he. "Like me, he has not risen much in life. Georges has sunk into poverty. All the others, by speculation and skill, have made fortunes. Do we

*Lit.: Trust company.

breakfast here, Pierrotin?" he asked, clapping the man on the shoulder.

"I am not the driver," said Pierrotin.

"What are you, then?" asked Colonel Husson.

"I am the proprietor," replied Pierrotin.

"Well, well, do not quarrel with an old friend," said Oscar, pointing to his mother, but still with a patronizing air; "do you not remember Madame Clapart?"

It was the more graceful of Oscar to name his mother to Pierrotin, because at this moment Madame Moreau (de l'Oise) had gotten out of the *coupé* and looked scornfully at Oscar and his mother as she heard the name.

"On my honor, madame, I should never have known you; nor you either, monsieur. You get it hot in Africa, it would seem?"

The disdainful pity Oscar had felt for Pierrotin was the last blunder into which vanity betrayed the hero of this scene; and for that he was punished, though not too severely. On this wise: Two months after he had settled at Beaumont-sur-Oise, Oscar paid his court to Mademoiselle Georgette Pierrotin, whose fortune amounted to a hundred and fifty thousand francs, and by the end of the winter of 1838 he married the daughter of the owner of the Oise Valley coach service.

The results of the journey to Presles had given Oscar discretion, the evening at Florentine's had disciplined his honesty, the hardships of a military life had taught him the value of social distinctions and submission to fate. He was prudent, capable, and consequently happy. The Comte de Sérizy, before his death, obtained for Oscar the place of revenue collector at Pontoise. The influence of Monsieur Moreau (de l'Oise), of the Comtesse de Sérizy, and of Monsieur le Baron de Canalis, who, sooner or later, will again have a seat in the Ministry, will secure Monsieur Husson's promotion to

the post of receiver-general, and the Camusots now recognize him as a relation.

Oscar is a commonplace man, gentle, unpretentious, and modest; faithful—like the Government he serves—to the happy medium in all things. He invites neither envy nor scorn. In short, he is the modern French citizen.

PARIS, *February*, 1842.

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THE SEAMY SIDE OF HISTORY

AT THE SIGN OF THE CAT AND RACKET

THE FIRM OF NUCINGEN

AN EPISODE OF THE REIGN OF TERROR

THE SEAMY SIDE OF HISTORY
AT THE SIGN OF THE CAT
AND RACKET
THE FIRM OF NUCINGEN
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PREFACE.

THERE is in "L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine" an ominous atmosphere of flagging, combined with a not less ominous return to a weaker handling of ideas and schemes which the author had handled more strongly earlier. We have seen that the secret-society craze—a favorite one with most Frenchmen, and closely connected with their famous panic-terror of being "betrayed" in war and politics—had an especially strong hold on this most typical of French novelists. He had almost begun his true career with the notion of a league of "Dévorants," of persons banded, if not exactly against society, at any rate for the gratifying of their own desires and the avenging of their own wrongs, with an utter indifference to social laws and arrangements. He ended it, or nearly so, with the idea of a contrary league of Consolation, which should employ money, time, pains, and combination to supply the wants and heal the wounds which Society either directly causes or more or less callously neglects.

The later idea is, of course, a far nobler one than the earlier; it shows a saner, healthier, happier state of imagination; it coincides rather remarkably with an increasing tendency of the age ever since Balzac's time. Nay, more, the working out of it contains none of those improbabilities and childishnesses which, to any but very youthful tastes and judgments, mar the "Histoire des Treize" [The Thirteen]. And it is also better written. Balzac, with that extraordinary "long development" of his, as they say of wines, constantly improved in this particular; and whatever may be the doubts on the point referred to above, we may say with some confidence that had he lived, he would have written, in the mere sense of *writing*, ever better and better. Yet again, we catch quaint and pleasant echoes of youth in these pages, and are carried back nearly

fifty years in nominal date, and more than twenty in dates of actual invention, by such names as Montauran and Pille-Miche and Marche-à-Terre.

But when all this is said, it cannot, I think, be denied that a certain dullness, a heaviness, does rest on Madame de la Chanterie and L'Initié. The very reference to the "Médecin de Campagne," which Balzac with his systematizing mania brings in, calls up another unlucky contrast. There, too, the benevolence and the goodness were something fanciful, not to say fantastic; but there was an inspiration, a vigor, to speak vulgarly, a "go," which we do not find here. Balzac's awkward and inveterate habit of parenthetic and episodic narratives and glances backward is not more obvious here than in many other pieces; but there is not, as in some at least of these other pieces, strength enough of main interest to carry it off. The light is clear, it is religious and touching in its dimness; but the lamp burns low. In the very interesting preface, dated July, 1842, which Balzac prefixed to the first collection of the Comédie Humaine, he endeavors, naturally enough, to represent the division into Scènes de la Vie Parisienne, etc., as a rational and reasoned one. Although not quite arbitrary, it was of course to a great extent determined by considerations which were not those of design; and we did not require the positive testimony which we find in the Letters to tell us that in the author's view, as well as in our own, not a few of the stories might have been shifted over from one division to another, and have filled their place just as well in the other as in the one.

"La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote," however, which originally bore the much less happy title of "Gloire et Malheur" [Fame and Sorrow], was a Scène de la Vie Privée from the first, and it bears out better than some of its companions its author's expressed intention of making these "scenes" represent youth, whether Parisian or Provincial. Few of Balzac's stories have united the general suffrage for touching grace

more than this; and there are few better examples of his minute Dutch-painting than the opening passages, or of his unconquerable delight in the details of business than his sketch of Monsieur Guillaume's establishment and its ways. The French equivalent of the "Complete Tradesman" of Defoe lasted much longer than his English counterpart; but, except in the smaller provincial towns, he is said to be uncommon now. As for the plot, if such a stately name can be given to so delicate a sketch, it is of course open to downright British judgment to pronounce the self-sacrifice of Lebas more ignoble than touching, the conduct of Théodore too childish to deserve the excuses sometimes possible for passionate inconstancy, and the character of Augustine angelically idiotic. This last outrage, if it were committed, would indeed only be an instance of the irreconcilable difference which almost to the present day divides English and French ideas of ideally perfect girlhood, and of that state of womanhood which corresponds thereto. The *candeur adorable* which the Frenchman adores and exhibits in the girl; the uncompromising, though mortal, passion of the woman; are too different from any ideal that we have entertained, except for a very short period in the eighteenth century. But there are few more pathetic and charming impersonations of this other ideal than Augustine de Sommervieux.

"La Maison Nucingen" has interests of various kinds. The story of Madame Surville, and the notary, and his testimony to Balzac's competence in bankruptcy matters, have been referred to in the General Introduction. "La Maison Nucingen" is scarcely less an example of this than "César Birotteau." It is also a curious study of Parisian business generally, showing the intense and extraordinary interest which Balzac took in anything speculative. Evil tongues at the time identified Nucingen with the first Rothschild of the Paris branch, but the resemblances are of the most general and distant kind. Indeed, it may be said that Balzac, to his infinite honor both

in character and genius, seldom indulged in the clumsy lugging in of real persons by head and shoulders which has come into fashion since his time, especially in France. Even where there are certain resemblances, as in Henri de Marsay to Charles de Rémusat, in Rastignac to Thiers, in Lousteau to Jules Janin, and elsewhere, the borrowed traits are so blended and disguised with others, and the whole so melted down and reformed by art, that not merely could no legitimate anger be aroused by them, but the artist could not be accused of having in any way exceeded his rights as an artist and his duty as a gentleman. If he has ever stepped out of these wise and decent limits, the transgression is very rare, and certainly Nucingen is not an example of it. For the rest, the story itself is perhaps more clever and curious than exactly interesting.

"L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine," as above stated, was, in part, one of the very latest of Balzac's works, and was actually finished during his residence at Vierzschovnia. "Madame de la Chanterie," however, was somewhat earlier, part of it having been written in 1842. It appeared in a fragmentary and rather topsy-turvy fashion, with separate titles, in the "Musée des Familles," from September in the year just named to November, 1844, and was only united together in the first edition of the Comédie two years later, though even after this it had a separate appearance with some others of its author's works in 1847. "L'Initié," or, as it was first entitled, "Les Frères de la Consolation," was not written till this latter year, and appeared in 1848 in the "Spectateur Republicain," but not as a book till after the author's death. In both cases there was the usual alternation of chapter divisions, with headings and none.

"La Maison Nucingen" (which the author also thought of calling "La Haute Banque") originally appeared with "La Femme Supérieure" ("Les Employés") and that part of "Splendeurs et Misères" entitled "La Torpille," in October,

1838, published by Werdet in two volumes. Six years later it took rank as a Scène de la Vie Parisienne in the first edition of the Comédie.

G. S.

THE SEAMY SIDE OF HISTORY.

FIRST EPISODE.

MADAME DE LA CHANTERIE.

ONE fine September evening, in the year 1836, a man of about thirty was leaning over the parapet of the quay at a point whence the Seine may be surveyed up stream from the Jardin des Plantes to Notre-Dame, and down in grand perspective to the Louvre.

There is no such view elsewhere in the Capital of Ideas (Paris). You are standing, as it were, on the poop of a vessel that has grown to vast proportions. You may dream there of Paris from Roman times to the days of the Franks, from the Normans to the Burgundians, through the Middle Ages to the Valois, Henri IV., Napoleon, and Louis Philippe. There is some vestige or building of each period to bring it to mind. The dome of Saint-Geneviève shelters the Latin Quarter. Behind you rises the magnificent east end of the cathedral. The Hôtel de Ville speaks of all the revolutions, the Hôtel Dieu of all the miseries of Paris. After glancing at the splendors of the Louvre, take a few steps, and you can see the rags that hang out from the squalid crowd of houses that huddle between the Quai de la Tournelle and the Hôtel Dieu; the authorities are, however, about to clear them away.

In 1836 this astonishing picture inculcated yet another lesson. Between the gentleman who leaned over the parapet and the cathedral, the deserted plot, known of old as le Terrain, was still strewn with the ruins of the archbishop's palace. As we gaze there on so many suggestive objects, as the mind takes in the past and the present of the city of Paris, religion

seems to have established herself there that she might lay her hands on the sorrows on both sides of the river, from the Saint-Antoine suburb to that of Saint-Marceau.

It is to be hoped that these sublime harmonies may be completed by the construction of an episcopal palace in a Gothic style to fill the place of the meaningless buildings that now stand between the Island, the Rue d'Arcole, and the Quai de la Cité.

This spot, the very heart of old Paris, is beyond anything deserted and melancholy. The waters of the Seine break against the wall with a loud noise, the cathedral throws its shadow there at sunset. It is not strange that vast thoughts should brood there in a brain-sick man. Attracted, perhaps, by an accordance between his own feelings at the moment and those to which such a varied prospect must give rise, the loiterer folded his hands over the parapet, lost in the twofold contemplation of Paris and of himself! The shadows spread, lights twinkled into being, and still he did not stir; carried on as he was by the flow of a mood of thought, big with the future, and made solemn by the past.

At this instant he heard two persons approaching, whose voices had been audible on the stone bridge which they had crossed from the Island of the Cité to the Quai de la Tournelle. The two speakers no doubt believed themselves to be alone, and talked somewhat louder than they would have done in a more frequented place, or if they had noticed the propinquity of a stranger. From the bridge their tones betrayed an eager discussion, bearing, as it seemed, from a few words that reached the involuntary listener, on a loan of money. As they came nearer, one of the speakers, dressed as a workingman, turned from the other with a gesture of despair. His companion looked around, called the man back, and said—

"You have not a sou to pay the bridge-toll. Here!"—and he gave him a coin—"and remember, my friend, it is

God Himself who speaks to us when a good thought occurs to any of us."

The last words startled the dreamer. The man who spoke had no suspicion that, to use a proverbial expression, he was killing two birds with one stone; that he spoke to two unhappy creatures—a workman at his wits' end and a soul without a compass; a victim of what Panurge's sheep call Progress, and a victim of what France calls equality.

These words, simple enough in themselves, acquired grandeur from the tone of the speaker, whose voice had a sort of magical charm. Are there not such voices, calm and sweet, affecting us like a view of the distant ocean?

The speaker's costume showed him to be a priest, and his face, in the last gleam of twilight, was pale and dignified, though worn. The sight of a priest coming out of the great cathedral of Saint Stephen at Vienna to carry extreme unction to a dying man persuaded Werner, the famous tragic poet, to become a Catholic. The effect was much the same on our Parisian when he saw the man who, without intending it, had brought him consolation; he discerned on the dark line of his horizon in the future a long streak of light where the blue of heaven was shining, and he followed the path of light, as the shepherds of the Gospel followed the voice that called to them from on high, "Christ the Lord is born!"

The man of healing speech walked on under the cathedral, and by favor of Chance—which is sometimes consistent—made his way toward the street from which the loiterer had come, and whither he was returning, led there by his own mistakes in life.

This young man's name was Godefroid. As this narrative proceeds, the reader will understand the reasons for giving to the actors in it their Christian names only.

And this is the reason why Godefroid, who lived near the Chausée d'Antin, was lingering at such an hour under the shadow of Notre-Dame.

He was the son of a retail dealer, who, by economy, had made some little fortune, and in him centred all the ambitions of his parents, who dreamed of seeing him a notary in Paris. At the early age of seven he had been sent to a school, kept by the Abbé Liautard, where he was thrown together with the children of certain families of distinction, who had selected this establishment for the education of their sons, out of attachment to religion, which, under the Emperor, was somewhat too much neglected in the lycées, or public schools. At that age social inequalities are not recognized between schoolfellows; but in 1821, when his studies were finished, Godefroid, articled to a notary, was not slow to perceive the distance that divided him from those with whom he had hitherto lived on terms of intimacy.

While studying the law, he found himself lost in the crowd of young men of the citizen class, who, having neither a ready-made fortune nor hereditary rank, had nothing to look to but their personal worth or persistent industry. The hopes built upon him by his father and mother, who had now retired from business, stimulated his conceit without giving him pride. His parents lived as simply as Dutch folk, not spending more than a quarter of their income of twelve thousand francs; they intended to devote their savings, with half their capital, to the purchase of a connection for their son. Godefroid, reduced also to live under the conditions of this domestic thrift, regarded them as so much out of proportion to his parents' dreams and his own that he felt disheartened. In weak characters such discouragement leads to envy. While many other men, in whom necessity, determination, and good-sense were more marked than talent, went straight and steadfastly onward in the path laid down for modest ambitions, Godefroid waxed rebellious, longed to shine, insisted on facing the brightest light, and so dazzled his eyes. He tried to "get on," but all his efforts ended in demonstrating his incapacity. At last, clearly perceiving too great

a discrepancy between his desires and his prospects, he conceived a hatred of social superiority; he became a Liberal, and tried to make himself famous by a book; but he learned, to his cost, to regard talent much as he regarded rank. Having tried by turns the profession of notary, the bar, and literature, he now aimed at the higher branch of the law.

At this juncture his father died. His mother, content in her old age with two thousand francs a year, gave up almost her whole fortune to his use. Possessor now, at twenty-five, of ten thousand francs a year, he thought himself rich, and he was so as compared with the past. Hitherto his life had been a series of acts with no will behind them, or of impotent willing; so, to keep pace with the age, to act, to become a personage, he tried to get into some circle of society by the help of his money.

At first he fell in with journalism, which has always an open hand for any capital that comes in its way. Now, to own a newspaper is to be a Personage; it means employing talent and sharing its successes without dividing its labors. Nothing is more tempting to second-rate men than thus to rise by the brains of others. Paris has had a few parvenus of this type, whose success is a disgrace both to the age and to those who have lent a lifting shoulder.

In this class of society Godefroid was soon cut out by the vulgar cunning of some and the extravagance of others, by the money of ambitious capitalists or the manœuvring of editors; then he was dragged into the dissipations that a literary or political life entails, the habits of critics behind the scenes, and the amusements needed by men who work their brains hard. Thus he fell into bad company; but he there learned that he was an insignificant-looking person, and that he had one shoulder higher than the other without redeeming this malformation by any distinguished ill-nature or wit. Bad manners are a form of self-payment which actors snatch by telling the truth.

Short, badly made, devoid of wit or of any strong bent, all seemed at an end for a young man at a time when for success in any career the highest gifts of mind are as nothing without luck, or the tenacity which commands luck.

The revolution of 1830 poured oil on Godefroid's wounds; he found the courage of hope, which is as good as that of despair. Like many another obscure journalist, he got an appointment where his Liberal ideas, at loggerheads with the demands of a newly established power, made him but a refractory instrument. Veneered only with Liberalism, he did not know, as superior men did, how to hold his own. To obey the Ministry was to him to surrender his opinions. And the Government itself seemed to him false to the laws that had given rise to it. Godefroid declared in favor of *movement* when what was needed was tenacity; he came back to Paris almost poor, but faithful to the doctrines of the opposition.

Alarmed by the licentiousness of the press, and yet more by the audacity of the republican party, he sought in retirement the only life suited to a being of incomplete faculties, devoid of such force as might defy the rough jolting of political life, weary, too, of repeated failures, of suffering and struggles which had won him no glory; and friendless, because friendship needs conspicuous qualities or defects, while possessing feelings that were sentimental rather than deep. Was it not, in fact, the only prospect open to a young man who had already been several times cheated by pleasure, and who had grown prematurely old from friction in a social circle that never rests nor lets others rest?

His mother, who was quietly dying in the peaceful village of Auteuil, sent to her son to come to her, as much for the sake of having him with her as to start him in the road where he might find the calm and simple happiness that befits such souls. She had at last taken Godefroid's measure when she saw that at twenty-eight he had reduced his whole fortune to four thousand francs a year; his desires blunted, his fancied

talents extinct, his energy nullified, his ambition crushed, and his hatred for every one who rose by legitimate effort increased by his many disappointments.

She tried to arrange a marriage for Godefroid with the only daughter of a retired merchant, thinking that a wife might be a guardian to his distressful mind, but the old father brought the mercenary spirit that abides in those who have been engaged in trade to bear on the question of settlements. At the end of a year of attentions and intimacy, Godefroid's suit was rejected. In the first place, in the opinion of these case-hardened traders, the young man must necessarily have retained a deep-dyed immorality from his former pursuits; and then, even during this past year, he had drawn upon his capital both to dazzle the parents and to attract the daughter. This not unpardonable vanity gave the finishing touch; the family had a horror of unthrift; and their refusal was final when they heard that Godefroid had sacrificed in six years a hundred and fifty thousand francs of his capital.

The blow fell all the harder on his aching heart because the girl was not at all good-looking. Still, under his mother's influence, Godefroid had credited the object of his addresses with a sterling character and the superior advantages of a sound judgment; he was accustomed to her face, he had studied its expression, he liked the young lady's voice, manners, and look. Thus, after staking the last hope of his life on this attachment, he felt the bitterest despair.

His mother dying, he found himself—he whose requirements had always followed the tide of fashion—with five thousand francs for his whole fortune, and the certainty of never being able to repair any future loss, since he saw himself incapable of the energy which is imperatively demanded for the grim task of "making a fortune."

But a man who is weak, aggrieved, and irritable cannot submit to be extinguished at a blow. While still in mourning, Godefroid wandered through Paris in search of something

to "turn up;" he dined in public rooms, he rashly introduced himself to strangers, he mingled in society, and met with nothing but opportunities for expenditure. As he wandered about the boulevards, he was so miserable that the sight of a mother with a young daughter to marry gave him as keen a pang as that of a young man going on horseback to the Bois, of a parvenu in a smart carriage, or of an official with a ribbon in his button-hole. The sense of his own inadequacy told him that he could not pretend even to the more respectable of second-class positions, nor to the easiest form of office-work. And he had spirit enough to be constantly vexed, and sense enough to bewail himself in bitter self-accusation.

Incapable of contending with life, conscious of certain superior gifts, but devoid of the will that brings them into play, feeling himself incomplete, lacking force to undertake any great work, or to resist the temptations of those tastes he had acquired from education or recklessness in his past life, he was a victim to three maladies, any one of them enough to disgust a man with life when he has ceased to exercise his religious faith. Indeed, Godefroid wore the expression so common now among men, that it has become the Parisian type; it bears the stamp of disappointed or smothered ambitions, of mental distress, of hatred lulled by the apathy of a life amply filled up by the superficial and daily spectacle of Paris, of satiety seeking stimulants, of repining without talent, of the affectation of force; the venom of past failure which makes a man smile at scoffing, and scorn all that is elevating, misprize the most necessary authorities, enjoy their dilemmas, and disdain all social forms.

This Parisian disease is to the active and persistent coalition of energetic malcontents what the soft wood is to the sap of a tree; it preserves it, feeds it, and hides it.

Weary of himself, Godefroid one morning resolved to give himself some reason for living. He had met a former school-

fellow, who had proved to be the tortoise of the fable while he himself had been the hare. In the course of such a conversation as is natural to old companions while walking in the sunshine on the Boulevard des Italiens, he was amazed to find that success had attended this man, who, apparently far less gifted than himself with talent and fortune, had simply resolved each day to do as he had resolved the day before. The brain-sick man determined to imitate this simplicity of purpose.

"Life in the world is like the earth," his friend had said; "it yields in proportion to our labors."

Godefroid was in debt. As his first penance, his first duty, he required himself to live in seclusion and pay his debts out of his income. For a man who was in the habit of spending six thousand francs when he had five, it was no light thing to reduce his expenses to two thousand francs. He read the advertisement-sheets every morning, hoping to find a place of refuge where he might live on a fixed sum, and where he might enjoy the solitude necessary to a man who wanted to study and examine himself and discern a vocation. The manners and customs of the boarding-houses in the Latin Quarter were an offense to his taste; a private pension, he thought, would be unhealthy; and he was fast drifting back into the fatal uncertainty of a will-less man, when the following advertisement caught his eye:

"Small apartments, at seventy francs a month; might suit a clerk in orders. Quiet habits expected. Board included; and the rooms will be inexpensively furnished on mutual agreement. Inquire of M. Millet, grocer, Rue Chanoinesse, by Notre-Dame, for all further particulars."

Attracted by the artless style of this paragraph, and the aroma of simplicity it seemed to bear, Godefroid presented himself at the grocer's store at about four in the afternoon, and was told that at that hour Madame de la Chanterie was dining, and could see no one at meal-times. The lady would

be visible in the evening after seven, or between ten and twelve in the morning. While he talked, Monsieur Millet took stock of Godefroid, and proceeded to put him through his first examination—"Was monsieur single? Madame wished for a lodger of regular habits. The house was locked up by eleven at latest.

"Well," said he in conclusion, "you seem to me, monsieur, to be of an age to suit Madame de la Chanterie's views."

"What age do you suppose I am?" asked Godefroid.

"Somewhere about forty," replied the grocer.

This plain answer cast Godefroid into the depths of misanthropy and dejection. He went to dine on the Quai de la Tournelle, and returned to gaze at Notre-Dame just as the fires of the setting sun were rippling and breaking in wavelets on the buttresses of the great nave. The quay was already in shadow, while the towers still glittered in the glow, and the contrast struck Godefroid as he tasted all the bitterness which the grocer's brutal simplicity had stirred within him.

Thus the young man was oscillating between the whisperings of despair and the appealing tones of religious harmony aroused in his mind by the cathedral bells, when, in the darkness, and silence, and calm moonshine, the priest's speech fell on his ear. Though far from devout—like most men of the century—his feelings were touched by these words, and he went back to the Rue Chanoinesse, where he had but just decided not to go.

The priest and Godefroid were equally surprised on turning into the Rue Massillon, opposite the north door of the cathedral, at the spot where it ends by the Rue de la Colombe, and is called Rue des Marmousets. When Godefroid stopped under the arched doorway of the house where Madame de la Chanterie lived, the priest turned round to examine him by the light of a hanging oil-lamp, which will, very likely, be one of the last to disappear in the heart of old Paris.

"Do you wish to see Madame de la Chanterie, monsieur?" asked the priest.

"Yes," replied Godefroid. "The words I have just heard you utter to that workman prove to me that this house, if you dwell in it, must be good for the soul."

"Then you witnessed my failure," said the priest, lifting the knocker, "for I did not succeed."

"It seems to me that it was the workman who failed. He had begged sturdily enough for money."

"Alas!" said the priest, "one of the greatest misfortunes attending revolutions in France is that each, in its turn, offers a fresh premium to the ambitions of the lower classes. To rise above his status and make a fortune, which, in these days, is considered the social guarantee, the workman throws himself into monstrous plots, which, if they fail, must bring those who dabble in them before the bar of human justice. This is what good-nature sometimes ends in."

The porter now opened a heavy gate, and the priest said to Godefroid—

"Then you have come about the rooms to be let? the 'little suite,' we call it."

"Yes, monsieur."

The priest and Godefroid then crossed a fairly wide court-yard, beyond which stood the black mass of a tall house, flanked by a square tower even higher than the roof, and amazingly old. Those who know the history of Paris are aware that the soil has risen so much round the cathedral that there is not a trace to be seen of the twelve steps which originally led up to it. Hence what was the first floor of this house must now form the cellars. There is a short flight of outer steps to the door of the tower, and inside it an ancient *Vise* or stairs, winding in a spiral round a newell carved to imitate a vine-stock. This style, resembling that of the Louis XII. staircases at Blois, dates as far back as the fourteenth century.

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Struck by these various signs of antiquity, Godefroid could not help exclaiming—

"This tower was not built yesterday!"

"It is said to have withstood the attacks of the Normans and to have formed part of a primeval palace of the kings of Paris; but according to more probable traditions, it was the residence of Fulbert, the famous canon, and the uncle of Héloïse."

As he spoke the priest opened the door of the apartment, which seemed to be the first floor, and which, in fact, is now but just above the ground of both the outer and the inner courtyard—for there is a small second court.

In the first room a servant sat knitting by the light of a small lamp; she wore a cap devoid of any ornament, but its gauffered cambric frills. She stuck one of the needles through her hair, but did not lay down her knitting as she rose to open the door of a drawing-room looking out on the inner court. This room was lighted up. The woman's dress suggested to Godefroid that of some gray sisters.

"Madame, I have found you a tenant," said the priest, showing in Godefroid, who saw in the room three men, sitting in armchairs near Madame de la Chanterie.

The three gentlemen rose; the mistress of the house also; and when the priest had pushed forward a chair for the stranger, and he had sat down in obedience to a sign from Madame de la Chanterie and an old-fashioned bidding to "Be seated," the Parisian felt as if he were far indeed from Paris, in remote Brittany, or the backwoods of Canada.

There are, perhaps, degrees of silence. Godefroid, struck already by the tranquillity of the Rue Massillon and Rue Chanoinesse, where a vehicle passes perhaps twice in a month, struck too by the stillness of the courtyard and the tower, may have felt himself at the very heart of silence, in this drawing-room, hedged round by so many old streets, old courtyards, and old walls.

This part of the Island, called the Cloister, preserves the character common to all cloisters; it is damp, and cold, and monastic; silence reigns there unbroken, even during the noisiest hours of the day. It may also be remarked that this part of the city, lying between the body of the cathedral and the river, is to the north and under the shadow of Notre-Dame. The east wind loses itself there, unchecked by any obstacle, and the fogs from the Seine are to some extent entrapped by the blackened walls of the ancient metropolitan church.

So no one will be surprised at the feeling that came over Godefroid on finding himself in this ancient abode, and in the presence of four persons as silent and as solemn as everything around them. He did not look about him; his curiosity centred in Madame de la Chanterie, whose name even had already puzzled him.

This lady was evidently a survival from another century, not to say another world. She had a rather sweet face, with a soft, coldly-colored complexion, an aquiline nose, a benign brow, hazel eyes, and a double chin, the whole framed in curls of silver hair. Her dress could only be described by the old name of *fourreau* (literally a sheath, a tightly fitting dress), so tightly was she cased in it, in the fashion of the eighteenth century. The material—silk of carmelite gray, finely and closely striped with green—seemed to have come down from the same date; the bodice, cut low, was hidden under a mantilla of richer silk,* flounced with black lace, and fastened at the bosom with a brooch containing a miniature. Her feet, shod in black velvet shoes, rested on a little stool. Madame de la Chanterie, like her maidservant, was knitting stockings, and had a knitting-pin stuck through her waving hair under her lace cap.

"Have you seen Monsieur Millet?" she asked Godefroid in the head voice peculiar to dowagers of the Saint-Germain

* *Poult-de-soie.*

suburb, as if to invite him to speak, seeing that he was almost thunderstruck.

"Yes, madame."

"I am afraid the rooms will hardly suit you," she went on, observing that her proposed tenant was dressed with elegance in clothes that were new and smart.

Godefroid, in fact, was wearing patent-leather shoes, yellow gloves, handsome shirt-studs, and a neat watch-chain passed through the button-hole of a black silk vest sprigged with blue.

Madame de la Chanterie took a small silver whistle out of her pocket and blew it. The woman-servant came in.

"Manon, child, show this gentleman the rooms. Will you, my dear friend, accompany him?" she said to the priest. "And if by any chance the rooms should suit you," she added, rising and looking at Godefroid, "we will afterward discuss the terms."

Godefroid bowed and went out. He heard the iron rattle of a bunch of keys which Manon took out of a drawer, and saw her light a candle in a large brass candlestick.

Manon led the way without speaking a word. When he found himself on the stairs again, climbing to the upper floors, he doubted the reality of things; he felt dreaming though awake, and saw the whole world of fantastic romance such as he had read of in his hours of idleness. And any Parisian dropped here, as he was, out of the modern city with its luxurious houses and furniture, its glittering restaurants and theatres, and all the stirring heart of Paris, would have felt as he did. The single candle carried by the servant lighted the winding-stair but dimly; spiders had hung it with their dusty webs.

Manon's dress consisted of a skirt broadly pleated and made of coarse woolen stuff; the bodice was cut square at the neck, behind and before, and all her clothes seemed to move in a piece. Having reached the third floor, which had been

the fourth, Manon stopped, turned the springs of an antique lock, and opened a door painted in coarse imitation of knotted mahogany.

"There!" said she, leading the way.

Who had lived in these rooms? A miser, an artist, who had died of want, a cynic indifferent to the world, or a pious man who was alien to it? Any one of the four seemed possible, as the visitor smelt the very odor of poverty, saw the greasy stains on wall-papers covered with a layer of smoke, the blackened ceilings, the windows with their small dusty panes, the brown-tiled floor, the wainscot sticky with a deposit of fog. A damp chill came down the fireplaces, faced with carved stonework that had been painted, and with mirrors framed in the seventeenth century. The rooms were at the angle of a square, as the house stood, inclosing the inner courtyard, but this Godefroid could not see, as it was dark.

"Who used to live here?" Godefroid asked of the priest.

"A councilor to the Parlement, madame's granduncle, a Monsieur de Boisfrelon. He had been quite childish ever since the Revolution, and died in 1832 at the age of ninety-six; madame could not bear the idea of seeing a stranger in the rooms so soon; still, she cannot endure the loss of rent."

"Oh, and madame will have the place cleaned and furnished, to be all monsieur could wish," added Manon.

"It will only depend on how you wish to arrange the rooms," said the priest. "They can be made into a nice sitting-room and a large bedroom and dressing-room, and the two small rooms round the corner are large enough for a spacious study. That is how my rooms are arranged below this, and those on the next floor."

"Yes," said Manon; "Monsieur Alain's rooms are just like these, only that they look out on the tower."

"I think I had better see the rooms again by daylight," said Godefroid shyly.

"Perhaps so," said Manon.

The priest and Godefroid went downstairs again, leaving Manon to lock up, and she then followed to light them down. Then, when he was in the drawing-room, Godefroid, having recovered himself, could, while talking to Madame de la Chanterie, study the place, the personages, and the surroundings.

The window-curtains of this drawing-room were of old red satin; there was a cornice-valance, and the curtains were looped with silk cord; the red tiles of the floor showed beyond an ancient tapestry carpet that was too small to cover it entirely. The woodwork was painted stone-color. The ceiling, divided down the middle by a joist starting from the chimney, looked like an addition lately conceded to modern luxury; the easy-chairs were of wood painted white, with tapestry seats. A shabby clock, standing between two gilt candlesticks, adorned the mantel. An old table with stag's feet stood by Madame de la Chanterie, and on it were her balls of wool in a wicker basket. A clockwork lamp threw light on the picture.

The three men, sitting as rigid, motionless, and speechless as bronzes, had, like Madame de la Chanterie, evidently ceased speaking on hearing the stranger return. Their faces were perfectly cold and reserved, as befitted the room, the house, and the neighborhood.

Madame de la Chanterie agreed that Godefroid's observations were just, and said that she had postponed doing anything till she was informed of the intentions of her lodger, or rather of her boarder; for if the lodger could conform to the ways of the household, he was to board with them—but their ways were so unlike those of Paris life! Here, in the Rue Chanoinesse, they kept country hours; every one, as a rule, had to be in by ten at night; noise was not to be endured; neither women nor children were admitted, so that their regular habits might not be interfered with. No one, perhaps, but a priest could agree to such a rule. At any rate,

Madame de la Chanterie wished for some one who liked plain living and had few requirements; she could only afford the most necessary furniture in the rooms. Monsieur Alain was satisfied, however—and she bowed to one of the gentlemen—and she would do the same for the new lodger as for the old.

"But," said the priest, "I do not think that monsieur is quite inclined to come and join us in our convent."

"Indeed; why not?" said Monsieur Alain. "We are all quite content, and we all get on very well."

"Madame," said Godefroid, rising, "I will have the honor of calling on you again to-morrow."

Though he was but a young man, the four old gentlemen and Madame de la Chanterie stood up, and the priest escorted him to the outer steps. A whistle sounded, and at the signal the porter appeared, lantern in hand, to conduct Godefroid to the street; then he closed the yellow gate, as heavy as that of a prison, and covered with arabesque ironwork, so old that it would be hard to determine its date.

When Godefroid found himself sitting in a hack, and being carried to the living regions of Paris, where light and warmth reigned, all he had just seen seemed like a dream; and, as he walked along the Boulevard des Italiens, his impressions already seemed as remote as a memory. He could not help saying to himself—

"Shall I find those people there to-morrow, I wonder?"

On the following day, when he woke in the midst of the elegance of modern luxury and the refinements of English comfort, Godefroid recalled all the details of his visit to the Cloister of Notre-Dame, and came to some conclusions in his mind as to the things he had seen there. The three gentlemen, whose appearance, attitude, and silence had left an impression on him, were no doubt boarders, as well as the priest. Madame de la Chanterie's gravity seemed to him to be the result of the reserved dignity with which she had endured

some great sorrow. And yet, in spite of the explanations he gave himself, Godefroid could not help feeling that there was an air of mystery in those uncommunicative faces. He cast a glance at his furniture to choose what he could keep, what he thought indispensable; but, transporting them in fancy to the horrible rooms in the Rue Chanoinesse, he could not help laughing at the grotesque contrast they would make there, and determined to sell everything, and pay away so much as they might bring; leaving the furnishing of the rooms to Madame de la Chanterie. He longed for a new life, and the objects that could recall his old existence must be bad for him. In his craving for transformation—for his was one of those natures which rush forward at once with a bound, instead of approaching a situation step by step as others do—he was seized, as he sat at breakfast, by an idea: he would realize his fortune, pay his debts, and place the surplus with the banking firm his father had done business with.

This banking house was that of MM. Mongenod & Co., established in Paris since 1816 or 1817, a firm whose reputation had never been blown on in the midst of the commercial depravity which at this time had blighted, more or less, several great Paris houses. Thus, in spite of their immense wealth, the houses of Nucingen and du Tillet, of Keller Brothers, of Palma & Co., suffered under a secret dis-esteem whispered, as it were, between lip and ear. Hideous transactions had led to such splendid results; and political successes, nay, monarchical principles, had overgrown such foul beginnings, that no one in 1834 thought for a moment of the mud in which the roots were set of such majestic trees—the upholders of the State. At the same time, there was not one of these bankers that did not feel aggrieved by praises of the house of Mongenod.

The Mongenods, following the example of English bankers, make no display of wealth; they do everything very quietly, and carry on their business with such prudence, shrewdness,

and honesty as allow them to operate with certainty from one end of the world to the other.

The present head of the house, Frédéric Mongenod, is brother-in-law to the Vicomte de Fontaine. Thus his numerous family is connected, through the Baron de Fontaine, with Monsieur Grossetête, the receiver-general (brother to the Grossetête & Co. of Limoges), with the Vandenesses, and with Planat de Baudry, another receiver-general. This relationship, after being of the greatest service to the late Mongenod senior in his financial operations at the time of the Restoration, had gained him the confidence of many of the old nobility, whose capital and vast savings were intrusted to his bank. Far from aiming at the peerage, like Keller, Nucingen, and du Tillet, the Mongenods kept out of political life, and knew no more of it than was needed for banking business.

Mongenod's bank occupies a magnificent house in the Rue de la Victoire, with a garden behind and a courtyard in front, where Madame Mongenod resided with her two sons, with whom she was in partnership. Madame la Vicomtesse de Fontaine had taken out her share on the death of the elder Mongenod in 1827. Frédéric Mongenod, a handsome fellow of about thirty-five, with a cold manner, as silent and reserved as a Genevese, and as neat as an Englishman, had acquired under his father all the qualifications needed in his difficult business. He was more cultivated than most bankers, for his education had given him the general knowledge which forms the curriculum of the Polytechnic School; and, like many bankers, he had an occupation, a taste, outside his regular business, a love of physics and chemistry. Mongenod junior, ten years younger than Frédéric, filled the place, under his elder brother, that a head-clerk holds under a lawyer or a notary; Frédéric was training him, as he himself had been trained by his father, in the scientific side of banking, for a banker is to money what a writer is to ideas—they both ought to know everything.

Godefroid, as he mentioned his family name, could see how highly his father had been respected, for he was shown through the offices at once to that next to Mongenod's private room. This room was shut in by glass doors, so that, in spite of his wish not to listen, Godefroid overheard the conversation going on within.

"Madame, your account shows sixteen hundred thousand francs on both sides of the balance sheet," Mongenod the younger was saying. "I know not what my brother's views may be; he alone can decide whether an advance of a hundred thousand francs is possible. You lacked prudence. It is not wise to put sixteen hundred thousand francs into a business——"

"Too loud, Louis!" said a woman's voice. "Your brother's advice is never to speak but in an undertone. There may be some one in the little waiting-room."

At this instant Frédéric Mongenod opened the door from his living rooms to his private office; he saw Godefroid, and went through to the inner room, where he bowed respectfully to the lady who was talking to his brother.

He showed Godefroid in first, saying as he did so: "And whom have I the honor of addressing?"

As soon as Godefroid had announced himself, Frédéric offered him a chair; and while the banker was opening his desk, Louis Mongenod and the lady, who was none else than Madame de la Chanterie, rose and went up to Frédéric. Then they all three went into a window recess, where they stood talking to Madame Mongenod, who was in all the secrets of the business. For thirty years past this clever woman had given ample proofs of her capacity, to her husband first, now to her sons, and she was, in fact, an active partner in the house, signing for it as they did. Godefroid saw in a pigeonhole a number of boxes, labeled "La Chanterie," and numbered 1 to 7.

When the conference was ended by a word from the senior

to his brother, "Well, then, go to the cashier," Madame de la Chanterie turned round, saw Godefroid, restrained a start of surprise, and then asked a few whispered questions of Mongenod, who replied briefly, also in a low voice.

Madame de la Chanterie wore thin prunella shoes and gray silk stockings; she had on the same dress as before, and was wrapped in the Venetian cloak that was just coming into fashion again. Her drawn bonnet of green silk, in the style of a good woman's, was lined with white, and her face was framed in flowing lace. She stood very erect, in an attitude which bore witness, if not to high birth, at any rate to aristocratic habits. But for her extreme affability, she would perhaps have seemed proud. In short, she was very imposing.

"It is not so much good-luck as a dispensation of Providence that has brought us together here, monsieur," said she to Godefroid. "I was on the point of declining a boarder whose habits, as I fancied, were ill-suited to those of my household; but Monsieur Mongenod has just given me some information as to your family which is——"

"Indeed, madame—monsieur——" said Godefroid, addressing the lady and the banker together, "I have no longer any family, and I came to ask advice of my late father's banker to arrange my affairs in accordance with a new plan of life."

Godefroid told his story in a few words, and expressed his desire of leading a new life.

"Formerly," said he, "a man in my position would have turned monk; but there are now no religious Orders——"

"Go to live with madame, if she will accept you as a boarder," said Frédéric Mongenod, after exchanging glances with Madame de la Chanterie, "and do not sell your investments; leave them in my hands. Give me the schedule of your debts; I will fix dates of payment with your creditors, and you can draw for your own use a hundred and fifty francs a month. It will take about two years to pay everything off.

During those two years, in the house to which you are going, you will have ample leisure to think of a career, especially as the people you will be living with can give you good advice."

Louis Mongenod came back with a hundred thousand-franc notes, which he gave to Madame de la Chanterie. Godefroid offered his arm to his future landlady, and took her to her coach.

"Then we shall meet again presently," said she in a kind tone.

"At what hour shall you be at home, madame?" said Godefroid.

"In two hours' time."

"I have time to get rid of my furniture," said he with a bow.

During the few minutes while Madame de la Chanterie's arm had lain on his as they walked side by side, Godefroid could not see beyond the halo cast about this woman by the words, "Your account stands at sixteen hundred thousand francs," spoken by Louis Mongenod to a lady who buried her life in the depths of the Cloister of Notre-Dame.

This idea, "She must be rich!" had entirely changed his view of things. "What age is she, I wonder?"

And he had a vision of a romance in his residence in the Rue Chanoinesse.

"She looks like an aristocrat; does she dabble in banking affairs?" he asked himself.

And in our day nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand would have thought of the possibility of marrying this woman.

A furniture dealer, who was also a decorator, but chiefly an agent for furnished flats, gave about three thousand francs for all that Godefroid wished to dispose of, leaving the things in his rooms for the few days needed to clean and arrange the dreadful rooms in the Rue Chanoinesse.

Thither the brain-sick youth at once repaired; he called in a painter, recommended by Madame de la Chanterie, who undertook for a moderate sum to whitewash the ceilings, clean the windows, paint the wainscoting like gray maple, and color the floors, within a week. Godefroid measured the rooms to carpet them all alike with green drugget of the cheapest description. He wished everything to be uniform and as simple as possible in his cell.

Madame de la Chanterie approved of this. With Manon's assistance she calculated how much white dimity would be needed for the window curtains and for a simple iron bedstead; then she undertook to procure the stuff and to have them made for a price so small as to amaze Godefroid. With the new furniture he would send in, his apartments would not cost him more than six hundred francs.

"So I can take about a thousand to Monsieur Mongenod."

"We here lead a Christian life," said Madame de la Chanterie, "which is, as you know, quite out of keeping with much superfluity, and I fear you still preserve too many."

As she gave her new boarder this piece of advice, she glanced at the diamond that sparkled in a ring through which the ends of Godefroid's blue necktie were drawn.

"I only mention this," she added, "because I perceive that you are preparing to break with the dissipated life of which you spoke with regret to Monsieur Mongenod."

Godefroid gazed at Madame de la Chanterie, listening with delight to the harmony of her clear voice; he studied her face, which was perfectly colorless, worthy to be that of one of the grave, cold Dutchwomen so faithfully depicted by the painters of the Flemish school, faces on which a wrinkle would be impossible.

"Plump and fair!" thought he, as he went away. "Still, her hair is white——"

Godefroid, like all weak natures, had readily accustomed himself to the idea of a new life, believing it would be perfect

happiness, and he was eager to settle in the Rue Chanoinesse; nevertheless, he had a gleam of prudence—or, if you like, of suspicion. Two days before moving in he went again to Monsieur Mongenod to ask for further information concerning the household he was about joining. During the few minutes he had spent now and then in his future home, to see what alterations were being made, he had observed the going and coming of several persons whose appearance and manner, without any air of mystery, suggested that they were busied in the practice of some profession, some secret occupation with the residents in the house. At this time many plots were afoot to help the elder branch of Bourbons to remount the throne, and Godefroid believed there was some conspiracy here.

But when he found himself in the banker's private room and under his searching eye, he was ashamed of himself as he formulated his question and saw a sardonic smile on Frédéric Mongenod's lips.

"Madame la Baronne de la Chanterie," he replied, "is one of the obscurest but one of the most honorable women in Paris. Have you any particular reason for asking for information?"

Godefroid fell back on flat excuses—he was arranging to live a long time with these strangers, and it was as well to know to whom he was tying himself, and the like. But the banker's smile only became more and more ironical, and Godefroid more and more ashamed, till he blushed at the step he had taken, and got nothing by it; for he dared ask no more questions about Madame de la Chanterie or his fellow-boarders.

Two days later, after dining for the last time at the Café Anglais, and seeing the two first pieces at the Variétés, at ten o'clock on a Monday night he came to sleep in the Rue Chanoinesse, where Manon lighted him to his room.

Solitude has a charm somewhat akin to that of the wild life

of savages, which no European ever gives up after having once tasted it. This may seem strange in an age when every one lives so completely in the sight of others that everybody is inquisitive about everybody else, and that privacy will soon have ceased to exist, so quickly do the eyes of the Press—the modern Argus—increase in boldness and intrusiveness; and yet the statement is supported by the evidence of the six first Christian centuries, when no recluse ever came back to social life again. There are few mental wounds that solitude cannot cure. Thus, in the first instance, Godefroid was struck by the calm and stillness of his new abode, exactly as a tired traveler finds rest in a bath.

On the day after his arrival as a boarder with Madame de la Chanterie, he could not help cross-examining himself on finding he was thus cut off from everything, even from Paris, though he remained under the shadow of its cathedral. Here, stripped of every social vanity, there would henceforth be no witnesses to his deeds but his conscience and his fellow-boarders. This was leaving the beaten highway of the world for an unknown track; and whither would the track lead him? To what occupation would he find himself committed?

He had been lost in such reflections for a couple of hours, when Manon, the only servant of the establishment, knocked at his door and told him that the second breakfast was served; they were waiting for him. Twelve was striking.

The new boarder went downstairs at once, prompted by his curiosity to see the five persons with whom he was thenceforth to live. On entering the drawing-room, he found all the residents in the house standing up and dressed precisely as they had been on the day when he had first come to make inquiries.

"Did you sleep well?" asked Madame de la Chanterie.

"I did not wake till ten o'clock," said Godefroid, bowing to the four gentlemen, who returned the civility with much gravity.

"We quite expected it," said the old man, known as Monsieur Alain, and he smiled.

"Manon spoke of the second breakfast," Godefroid went on. "I have, I fear, already broken one of your rules without intending it. At what hour do you rise?" addressing the lady.

"We do not get up quite by the rule of the monks of old," replied Madame de la Chanterie graciously, "but, like workmen, at six in winter and at half-past three in summer. We also go to bed by the rule of the sun; we are always asleep by nine in winter, by half-past eleven in summer. We drink some milk, which is brought from our own farm, after prayers, all but Monsieur l'Abbé de Vèze, who performs early mass at Notre-Dame—at six in summer, at seven in winter—and these gentlemen as well as I, your humble servant, attend that service every day."

Madame de la Chanterie finished this speech at table, where her five guests were now seated.

The dining-room, painted gray throughout, and decorated with carved wood of a design showing the taste of Louis XIV., opened out of the sort of anteroom where Manon sat, and ran parallel with Madame de la Chanterie's room, adjoining the drawing-room, no doubt. There was no ornament but an old clock. The furniture consisted of six chairs, their oval backs upholstered with worsted-work evidently done by Madame de la Chanterie, of two mahogany sideboards, and a table to match, on which Manon placed the breakfast without spreading a cloth. The breakfast, of monastic frugality, consisted of a small turbot with white sauce, potatoes, a salad, and four dishes of fruit: peaches, grapes, strawberries, and green almonds; then, by way of side-dishes, there was honey served in the comb as in Switzerland, beside butter, radishes, cucumbers, and sardines. The meal was served in china sprigged with small blue cornflowers and green leaves, a pattern which was no doubt luxuriously fashionable in the time of Louis

XVI., but which the increasing demands of the present day have made common.

"It is a fast day!" observed Monsieur Alain. "Since we go to mass every morning, you may suppose that we yield blindly to all the practices of the church, even the strictest."

"And you will begin by following our example," added Madame de la Chanterie, with a side-glance at Godefroid, whom she had placed by her side.

Of the four boarders, Godefroid already knew the names of the Abbé de Vèze and Monsieur Alain; but he yet had to learn those of the other two gentlemen. They sat in silence, eating with the absorbed attention that the pious seem to devote to the smallest details of their meals.

"And does this fine fruit also come from your farm, madame?" Godefroid inquired.

"Yes, monsieur," she replied. "We have our little model farm, just as the Government has; it is our country house, about three leagues from hence, on the road to Italy, near Villeneuve-Saint-Georges."

"It is a little estate that belongs to us all, and will become the property of the survivor," said the worthy Monsieur Alain.

"Oh, it is quite inconsiderable," added Madame de la Chanterie, who seemed afraid lest Godefroid should regard this speech as a bait.

"There are thirty acres of arable land," said one of the men unknown to Godefroid, "six acres of meadow, and an inclosure of about four acres of garden, in the midst of which our house stands; in front of it is the farm."

"But such an estate must be worth above a hundred thousand francs," observed Godefroid.

"Oh, we get nothing out of it but our produce," replied the same speaker.

He was a tall man, thin and grave. At a first glance he seemed to have served in the army; his white hair showed

that he was past sixty, and his face revealed great sorrows and religious resignation.

The second stranger, who appeared to be a sort of compound of a master of rhetoric and a man of business, was of middle height, stout but active, and his face bore traces of a joviality peculiar to the notaries and attorneys of Paris.

The dress of all four men was marked by the extreme neatness due to personal care; and Manon's hand was visible in the smallest details of their raiment. Their coats were perhaps ten years old, and preserved, as a priest's clothes are preserved, by the occult powers of a housekeeper and by constant use. These men wore, as it were, the livery of a system of life; they were all the slaves of the same thought, their looks spoke the same word, their faces wore an expression of gentle resignation, of inviting tranquillity.

"Am I indiscreet, madame," said Godefroid, "to ask the names of these gentlemen? I am quite prepared to tell them all about myself; may I not know as much about them as circumstances allow?"

"This," said Madame de la Chanterie, introducing the tall, thin man, "is Monsieur Nicolas; he is a retired colonel of the Gendarmes, ranking as a major-general. And this gentleman," she went on, turning to the little stout man, "was formerly councilor to the Bench of the King's Court in Paris; he retired from his functions in August, 1830; his name is Monsieur Joseph. Though you joined us but yesterday, I may tell you that in the world Monsieur Nicolas bore the name of Marquis de Montauran, and Monsieur Joseph that of Lecamus, Baron de Tresnes; but to us, as to the outer world, these names no longer exist. These gentlemen have no heirs; they have anticipated the oblivion that must fall on their families; they are simply Monsieur Nicolas and Monsieur Joseph, as you will be simply Monsieur Godefroid."

As he heard these two names—one so famous in the history of Royalism from the disaster which put an end to the rising

of the Chouans at the beginning of the Consulate, the other so long respected in the records of the old Parlement—Godefroid could not repress a start of surprise; but when he looked at these survivors from the wreck of the two greatest institutions of the fallen monarchy, he could not detect the slightest movement of feature or change of countenance that betrayed a worldly emotion. These two men did not or would not remember what they once had been. This was Godefroid's first lesson.

"Each name, gentlemen, is a chapter of history," said he respectfully.

"The history of our own time," said Monsieur Joseph, "of mere ruins."

"You are in good company," said Monsieur Alain, smiling.

He can be described in two words: he was a middle-class Paris citizen; a worthy man with the face of a calf, dignified by white hairs, but insipid with its eternal smile.

As to the priest, the Abbé de Vèze, his position was all sufficient. The priest who fulfills his mission is recognizable at the first glance when his eyes meet yours.

What chiefly struck Godefroid from the first was the profound respect shown by the boarders to Madame de la Chanterie; all of them, even the priest, notwithstanding the sacred dignity conferred by his functions, behaved to her as to a queen. He also noted the temperance of each guest; they ate solely for the sake of nourishment. Madame de la Chanterie, like the rest, took but a single peach and half a bunch of grapes; but she begged the new-comer not to restrict himself in the same way, offering him every dish in turn.

Godefroid's curiosity was excited to the highest pitch by this beginning. After the meal they returned to the drawing-room, where he was left to himself; Madame de la Chanterie and her four friends held a little privy council in a window recess. This conference, in which no animation was displayed, lasted for about half an hour. They talked in under-

tones, exchanging remarks which each seemed to have thought out beforehand. Now and again Monsieur Alain and Monsieur Joseph consulted their pocketbooks, turning over the leaves.

"You will see to the faubourg," said Madame de la Chanterie to Monsieur Nicolas, who went away.

These were the first words Godefroid could overhear.

"And you to the Saint-Marceau Quarter," she went on, addressing Monsieur Joseph.

"Will you take the Saint-Germain suburb and try to find what we need?" she added to the Abbé de Vèze, who at once went off. "And you, my dear Alain," she added with a smile, "look into matters. To-day's business is all settled," said she, returning to Godefroid.

She sat down in her armchair, and took from a little work-table some under-linen ready cut out, on which she began to sew as if working against time.

Godefroid, lost in conjectures, and seeing in all this a Royalist conspiracy, took the lady's speech as introductory, and, seating himself by her side, watched her closely. He was struck by her singular skill in sewing; while everything about her proclaimed the great lady, she had the peculiar deftness of a paid seamstress; for every one can distinguish, by certain tricks of working, the habits of a professional from those of an amateur.

"You sew," said Godefroid, "as if you were used to the business."

"Alas!" she said, without looking up, "I have done it ere now from necessity——"

Two large tears rose to the old woman's eyes, and rolled down her cheeks on to the work she held.

"Pray, forgive me, madame!" cried Godefroid.

Madame de la Chanterie looked at her new inmate, and saw on his features such an expression of regret, that she nodded to him kindly. Then, after wiping her eyes, she

recovered the composure that characterized her face, which was not so much cold as chastened.

"You here find yourself, Monsieur Godefroid—for, as you know already, you will be called only by your Christian name—amid the wreckage from a great storm. We have all been stricken and wounded to the heart through family interests or damaged fortunes, by the forty years' hurricane that overthrew royalty and religion, and scattered to the winds the elements that constituted France as it was of old. Words which seem but trivial bear a sting for us, and that is the reason of the silence that reigns here. We rarely speak of ourselves; we have forgotten what we were, and have found means of substituting a new life for the old life. It was because I fancied, from your revelation to the Mongenods, that there was some resemblance between your situation and our own, that I persuaded my four friends to receive you among us; in fact, we were anxious to find another recluse for our convent. But what do you propose to do? We do not enter on solitude without some stock of moral purpose."

"Madame, as I hear you speak, I shall be too happy to accept you as the arbiter of my destiny."

"That is speaking like a man of the world," said she. "You are trying to flatter me—a woman of sixty! My dear boy," she went on, "you are, you must know, among people who believe firmly in God, who have all felt His hand, and who have given themselves up to Him almost as completely as do the Trappists. Have you ever observed the assurance of a true priest when he has given himself to the Lord, when he hearkens to His voice and strives to be a docile instrument under the fingers of Providence? He has shed all vanity, all self-consciousness, all the feelings which cause constant offenses to the worldly; his quiescence is as complete as that of the fatalist, his resignation enables him to endure all things. The true priest—an Abbé de Vèze—is like a child with his mother; for the church, my dear sir, is a good mother.

Well, a man may be a priest without a tonsure; not all priests are in orders. If we devote ourselves to doing good, we imitate the good priest, we obey God! I am not preaching to you; I do not want to convert you; I am only explaining our life."

"Instruct me, madame," said Godefroid, quite conquered. "As I would wish not to fail in any single particular of your rules."

"You would find that too much to do; you will learn by degrees. Above all things, never speak here of your past misfortunes, which are mere childish vexations as compared with the terrible catastrophes with which God has stricken those with whom you are now living——"

All the time she spoke, Madame de la Chanterie went on pulling her thread through with distracting regularity; but at this full stop she raised her head and looked at Godefroid; she saw that he was spellbound by the thrilling sweetness of her voice, which had indeed a sort of apostolic unction. The young sufferer was gazing with admiration at the really extraordinary appearance of this woman, whose face was radiant. A faint flush tinged her wax-white cheeks, her eyes sparkled, a youthful soul gave life to the wrinkles that had acquired sweetness, and everything about her invited affection. Godefroid sat measuring the depth of the gulf that parted this woman from vulgar souls; he saw that she had attained to an inaccessible height, whither religion had guided her; and he was still too much of the world not to be stung to the quick, not to long to go down into that gulf and climb to the sharp peak where Madame de la Chanterie stood, and to stand by her side. While he gave himself up to a thorough study of this woman, he related to her all the mortifications of his life, all he could not say at Mongenod's, where his self-betrayal had been limited to a statement of his position.

"Poor child!"

This motherly exclamation, dropping from the lips of

Madame de la Chanterie, fell, from time to time, like healing balm, on the young man's heart.

"What can I find to take the place of so many hopes deceived, of so much disappointed affection?" said he at last, looking at the lady, who seemed lost in reverie. "I came here," he went on, "to reflect and make up my mind. I have lost my mother—will you take her place——"

"But," said she, "will you show me a son's obedience?"

"Yes, if you can show me the tenderness that exacts it."

"Very well; we will try," said she.

Godefroid held out his hand to take that which the lady offered him, and raised it reverently to his lips. Madame de la Chanterie's hands were admirably formed—neither wrinkled, nor fat, nor thin; white enough to move a young woman to envy, and of a shape that a sculptor might copy. Godefroid had admired these hands, thinking them in harmony with the enchantment of her voice and the heavenly blue of her eyes.

"Wait here," said Madame de la Chanterie, rising and going into her own room.

Godefroid was deeply agitated, and could not think to what he was to attribute the lady's departure; he was not left long in perplexity, for she returned with a book in her hand.

"Here, my dear boy," said she, "are the prescriptions of a great healer of souls. When the things of every-day life have failed to give us the happiness we looked for, we must seek in a higher life, and here is the key to that new world. Read a chapter of this book morning and evening; but give it your whole attention; study every word as if it were some foreign tongue. By the end of a month you will be another man. For twenty years now have I read a chapter every day, and my three friends, Nicolas, Alain, and Joseph, would no more omit it than they would miss going to bed and getting up again; imitate them for the love of God—for my sake," she said, with divine serenity and dignified confidence.

Godefroid turned the book round and read on the back "Imitation of Jesus Christ." The old lady's artlessness and youthful candor, her certainty that she was doing him good, confounded the ex-dandy. Madame de la Chanterie had exactly the manner, the intense satisfaction, of a woman who might offer a hundred thousand francs to a merchant on the verge of bankruptcy.

"I have used this book," she said, "for six-and-twenty years. God grant that its use may prove contagious! Go and buy me another copy, for the hour is at hand when certain persons are coming here who must not be seen."

Godefroid bowed and went up to his rooms, where he tossed the book on to a table, exclaiming—

"Poor, dear woman! There——"

The book, like all that are constantly used, fell open at a particular place. Godefroid sat down to arrange his ideas a little, for he had gone through more agitation that morning than he had in the course of the most stormy two months of his life; his curiosity especially had never been so strongly excited. His eyes wandered mechanically, as happens with men when their minds are absorbed in meditation, and fell on the two pages that lay facing him. He read as follows:

"CHAPTER XII.

"OF THE ROYAL WAY OF THE HOLY CROSS."

He picked up the volume, and this paragraph of that grand book captivated his eyes as though by words of fire:

"He has gone before you carrying His cross, and died for you, that you too might have strength to carry your cross, and be willing to die upon the Cross——

"Go where you will, try what you will, you cannot find a grander way, or a safer way, than the way of the holy cross. Arrange and order all your life as you like or think fit, still

you will find that you will always have something to suffer, by your own choice or by necessity; and so you will always find a cross. For either you will have bodily pain to bear or some trouble of the spirit.

"Sometimes God will leave you to yourself, sometimes you will be vexed by your neighbor, and, what is harder than all, you will often be weary of yourself, and there is no remedy or solace by which you can be delivered or relieved. You will have to bear your trouble as long as God decrees. For He wishes you to learn to suffer trial without consolation, to yield humbly to His will, and to become humbler by means of tribulation."

"What a book!" said Godefroid to himself, as he turned over the pages.

And he came upon these words:

"When you have come to feel all trouble sweet and pleasant for the love of Christ, then indeed you may say that all is well with you; you have made for yourself a heaven on earth."

Irritated by this simplicity, characteristic of strength, and enraged at being vanquished by this book, he shut it; but on the morocco cover he saw this motto, stamped in letters of gold—

"Seek only that which is eternal, and that only."

"And have they found it here?" he wondered.

He went out to purchase a handsome copy of the "Imitation of Christ," remembering that Madame de la Chanterie would want to read a chapter that evening. He went downstairs and into the street. For a minute or two he remained standing near the gate, undecided as to which way he would go, and wondering in what street and at what bookseller's he might find the book he needed; and he then heard the heavy sound of the outer gate shutting.

Two men had just come out of the Hôtel de la Chanterie

—for the reader, if he has understood the character of the old house, will have recognized it as an ancient family mansion. Manon, when she had called Godefroid to breakfast, had asked him how he had slept the first night at the Hôtel de la Chanterie, laughing as she spoke.

Godefroid followed the two men, with no idea of spying on them; and they, taking him for an indifferent passer-by, talked loud enough for him to hear them in those deserted streets. The men turned down the Rue Massillon, along by the side of Notre-Dame, and across the Cathedral Square.

"Well, old man, you see how easy it is to get the coppers out of 'em! You must talk their lingo, that is all."

"But we owe the money."

"Who to?"

"To the lady——"

"I should like to see myself sued for debt by that old image! I would——"

"You would what? You would pay her, I can tell you."

"You're right there, for if I paid I could get more out of her afterward than I got to-day."

"But wouldn't it be better to take their advice and set up on the square?"

"Get out!"

"Since she said she could find some one to stand security?"

"But we should have to give up life——"

"I am sick of 'life'—it is not life to be always working in the vineyards——"

"No; but didn't the abbé throw over old Marin the other day. He wouldn't give him a thing."

"Ay, but old Marin wanted to play such a game as no one can win at that has not thousands at his back."

At this moment the two men, who were dressed like working foremen, suddenly doubled, and retraced their steps to cross the bridge by the Hôtel-Dieu to the Place Maubert; Godefroid stood aside; but seeing that he was following them

closely, the men exchanged looks of suspicion, and they were evidently vexed at having spoken out so plainly.

Godefroid was indeed all the more interested in the conversation because it reminded him of the scene between the Abbé de Vèze and the workman on the evening of his first call.

"What goes on at Madame de la Chanterie's?" he asked himself once more.

As he thought over this question, he made his way to a bookshop in the Rue Saint-Jacques, and returned home with a very handsome copy of the best edition of the Imitation that has been published in France.

As he walked slowly homeward to be punctual to the dinner-hour, he went over in his mind all his experience of the morning, and found his soul singularly refreshed by it. He was possessed indeed by intense curiosity, but that curiosity paled before an indefinable wish; he was attracted by Madame de la Chanterie, he felt a vehement longing to attach himself to her, to devote himself for her, to please her and deserve her praise; in short, he was aware of a Platonic passion; he felt that there was unfathomed greatness in that soul, and that he must learn to know it thoroughly. He was eager to discover the secrets of the life of these pure-minded Catholics. And then, in this little congregation of the faithful, practical religion was so intimately allied with all that is most majestic in the Frenchwoman, that he resolved to do his utmost to be admitted to the fold. Such a vein of feeling would have been sudden indeed in a man of busy life; but Godefroid, as we have seen, was in the position of a shipwrecked wretch who clings to the most fragile bough, hoping that it may bear him, and his soul was ploughed land, ready to receive any seed.

He found the four gentlemen in the drawing-room, and he presented the book to Madame de la Chanterie, saying—

"I would not leave you without a copy for this evening."

"God grant," said she, looking at the splendid volume, "that this may be your last fit of elegance!"

And seeing that the four men had reduced the smallest details of their raiment to what was strictly decent and useful, noticing, too, that this principle was rigorously carried out in every detail of the house, Godefroid understood the purpose of this reproof so delicately expressed.

"Madame," said he, "the men you benefited this morning are monsters. Without intending it, I overheard what they were saying as they went away, and it was full of the blackest ingratitude."

"The two iron-workers from the Rue Mouffetard," said Madame de la Chanterie to Monsieur Nicolas, "that is your concern——"

"The fish gets off the hook more than once before it is caught," said Monsieur Alain, laughing.

Madame de la Chanterie's entire indifference on hearing of the immediate ingratitude of the men to whom she had certainly given money amazed Godefroid, who became thoughtful.

Monsieur Alain and the old lawyer made the dinner a cheerful meal; but the soldier was constantly grave, sad, and cold; his countenance bore the ineradicable stamp of a bitter sorrow, a perennial grief. Madame de la Chanterie was equally attentive to all. Godefroid felt that he was watched by these men, whose prudence was not less than their piety, and vanity led him to imitate their reserve, so he measured his words carefully.

This first day, indeed, was far more lively than those which came after. Godefroid, finding himself shut out from all serious matters, was obliged, during the early morning and the evening when he was alone in his rooms, to read "The Imitation of Christ," and he finally studied it as we must study a book when we are imprisoned with that one alone. We then feel to the book as we should toward a woman with

whom we dwelt in solitude; we must either love or hate the woman; and in the same way we must enter into the spirit of the author or not read ten lines of his work.

Now it is impossible not to be held captive by "The Imitation," which is to dogma what action is to thought. The Catholic spirit thrills through it, moves and works in it, struggles in it hand to hand with the life of man. That book is a trusty friend. It speaks to every passion, to every difficulty, even to the most worldly; it answers every objection, it is more eloquent than any preacher, for it speaks with your own voice—a voice that rises from your own heart and that you hear with your soul. In short, it is the Gospel interpreted and adapted to all times and seasons, controlling every situation. It is strange indeed that the church should not have canonized the Archbishop Gerson,* for the Holy Spirit certainly guided his pen.

To Godefroid the Hôtel de la Chanterie contained a woman as well as a book; every day he was more and more bewitched by her. In her he found flowers buried under the snow of many winters; he had glimpses of such a sacred friendship as religion sanctions, as the angels smile on—as bound those five, in fact—and against which no evil could prevail. There is a sentiment superior to all others, an affection of soul for soul which resembles those rare blossoms that grow on the loftiest peaks of the earth. One or two examples are shown us in a century; lovers are sometimes united by it; and it accounts for certain faithful attachments which would be inexplicable by the ordinary laws of the world. In such an attachment there are no disappointments, no differences, no vanities, no rivalries, no contrasts even, so intimately fused are two spiritual natures.

It was this immense and infinite feeling, the outcome of Catholic charity, that Godefroid was beginning to dream of. At times he could not believe in the spectacle before his eyes,

* Claimed by the French to be the author of the "Imitation of Christ."

and he sought to find reasons for the sublime friendship between these five persons, wondering to find true Catholics, Christians of the most primitive type, in Paris, and in 1836.

A week after entering the house, Godefroid had seen such a number of people come and go, he had overheard fragments of conversation in which such serious matters were discussed, that he understood that the existence of this council of five was full of prodigious activity. He noticed that not one of them slept more than six hours at most. Each of them had, as it were, lived through a first day before they met at the second breakfast. Strangers brought in or carried away sums of money, sometimes rather considerable. Mongenod's cashier came very often, always early in the morning, so that his work in the bank should not be interfered with by this business, which was independent of the regular affairs of the firm.

One evening Monsieur Mongenod himself called, and Godefroid observed a touch of filial familiarity in his tone to Monsieur Alain, mingled with the deep respect he showed to him, as to Madame de le Chanterie's three other boarders.

That evening the banker only asked Godefroid the most ordinary questions: Was he comfortable? Did he mean to stay? and so forth, advising him to persevere in his determination.

"There is but one thing wanting to make me happy," said Godefroid.

"And what is that?" said the banker.

"An occupation."

"An occupation!" cried the Abbé de Vèze. "Then you have changed your mind; you came to our retreat in search of rest."

"But without prayer, which gives life to the cloister; without meditation, which peoples the desert, rest becomes a disease," said Monsieur Joseph sententiously.

"Learn bookkeeping," said Mongenod, smiling. "In the course of a few months you may be of great use to my friends here——"

"Oh, with the greatest pleasure," exclaimed Godefroid.

The next day was Sunday. Madame de la Chanterie desired her boarder to give her his arm and to escort her to high mass.

"This," she said, "is the only thing I desire to force upon you. Many a time during the week I have been moved to speak to you of your salvation; but I do not think the time has come. You would have plenty to occupy you if you shared our beliefs, for you would also share our labors."

At mass, Godefroid observed the fervency of Messieurs Nicolas, Joseph, and Alain. Having, during these few days, convinced himself of the superior intellect of these three men, their perspicacity, extensive learning, and lofty spirit, he concluded that if they could thus abase themselves, the Catholic religion must contain mysteries which had hitherto escaped his ken.

"And, after all," said he to himself, "it is the religion of Bossuet, of Pascal, of Racine, of Saint-Louis, of Louis XVI., of Raphael, Michael-Angelo, and Ximenes, of Bayard and du Guesclin—and how should such a poor creature as I compare myself with these great brains, statesmen, poets, warriors?"

Were it not that a great lesson is to be derived from these trivial details, it would be foolish in such times as these to dwell on them; but they are indispensable to the interest of this narrative, which the readers of our day will, indeed, find it hard to believe, beginning as it does by an almost ridiculous incident—the influence exerted by a woman of sixty over a young man who had tried everything and found it wanting.

"You did not pray," said Madame de la Chanterie to Godefroid as they came out of Notre-Dame. "Not for any one, not even for the peace of your mother's soul?"

Godefroid reddened, but said nothing.

"Do me the pleasure," Madame de la Chanterie went on, "to go to your room, and not to come down to the drawing-room for an hour. And for the love of me, meditate on a chapter of the Imitation—the first of the Third Book, entitled 'OF CHRIST SPEAKING WITHIN THE FAITHFUL SOUL.'"

Godefroid bowed coolly, and went upstairs.

"The devil take 'em all!" he exclaimed, now really in a rage. "What the deuce do they want of me here? What game are they playing? Pshaw! Every woman, even the veriest bigot, is full of tricks, and if madame" (the name the boarders gave their hostess) "does not want me downstairs, it is because they are plotting something against me."

With this notion in his head, he tried to look out of his own window into that of the drawing-room, but the plan of the building did not allow of it. Then he went down one flight, but hastily ran up again; for it struck him that in a house where the principal inhabitants held such strict principles, an act of espionage would lead to his immediate dismissal. Now, to lose the esteem of those five persons seemed to him as serious a matter as public dishonor.

He waited about three-quarters of an hour, resolved to take Madame de la Chanterie by surprise, and to go down a little before the time she had named. He intended to excuse himself by a fib, saying that his watch was in fault, and twenty minutes too fast. He went down cautiously, without a sound, and on reaching the drawing-room door opened it suddenly.

He saw a man, still young but already famous, a poet whom he had often met in society, Victor de Vernisset, kneeling on one knee before Madame de la Chanterie, and kissing the hem of her gown. The sky falling in splinters as if it were made of crystal, as the ancients believed, would have amazed Godefroid less than this sight. The most shocking ideas besieged his brain, and the reaction was even more terrible when, just as he was about to utter the first sarcasm that rose to his lips,

he saw Monsieur Alain standing in a corner, counting thousand-franc notes.

In an instant Vernisset had started to his feet. Good Monsieur Alain stared in astonishment. Madame de la Chanterie flashed a look that petrified Godefroid, for the doubtful expression in the new boarder's face had not escaped her.

"Monsieur is one of us," she said to the young author, introducing Godefroid.

"You are a happy man, my dear fellow," said Vernisset. "You are saved! But, madame," he went on, turning to Madame de la Chanterie, "if all Paris could have seen me, I should be delighted. Nothing can ever pay my debt to you. I am your slave for ever! I am yours, body and soul. Command me whatever you will, I will obey; my gratitude knows no bounds. I owe you my life—it is yours."

"Come, come," said the worthy Alain, "do not be rash. Only work; and, above all, never attack religion in your writings. And remember you are in debt."

He handed him an envelope bulging with the bank-notes he had counted out. Victor de Vernisset's eyes filled with tears. He respectfully kissed Madame de la Chanterie's hand, and went away after shaking hands with Monsieur Alain and with Godefroid.

"You did not obey madame," said the good man solemnly; and his face had an expression of sadness, such as Godefroid had not as yet seen on it. "That is a capital crime. If it occurs again, we must part. It would be very hard on you, after having seemed worthy of our confidence——"

"My dear Alain," said Madame de la Chanterie, "be so good, for my sake, as to say nothing of this act of folly. We must not expect too much of a new-comer who has had no great sorrows, who has no religion—who has nothing, in fact, but great curiosity concerning every vocation, and who as yet does not believe in us."

"Forgive me, madame," replied Godefroid. "From this

moment I will be worthy of you; I submit to every test you may think necessary before initiating me into the secret of your labors; and if monsieur the abbé will undertake to enlighten me, I give myself up to him, soul and reason."

These words made Madame de la Chanterie so happy that a faint flush rose to her cheeks, she clasped Godefroid's hand and pressed it, saying, with strange emotion, "That is well!"

In the evening, after dinner, Godefroid saw a vicar-general of the diocese of Paris, who came to call, two canons, two retired mayors of Paris, and a lady who devoted herself to the poor. There was no gambling; the conversation was general, and cheerful without being futile.

A visitor who greatly surprised Godefroid was the Countess of Saint-Cygne, one of the loftiest stars of the aristocratic spheres, whose drawing-room was quite inaccessible to the citizen class and to parvenus. The mere presence of this great lady in Madame de la Chanterie's room was sufficiently amazing; but the way in which the two women met and treated each other was to Godefroid quite inexplicable, for it bore witness to an intimacy and constant intercourse which proved the high merit of Madame de la Chanterie. Madame de Saint-Cygne was gracious and friendly to her friend's four friends, and very respectful to Monsieur Nicolas.

As may be seen, social vanity still had a hold on Godefroid, who, hitherto undecided, now determined to yield, with or without conviction, to everything Madame de la Chanterie and her friends might require of him, to succeed in being affiliated by them to their Order, or initiated into their secrets, promising himself that until then he would not definitely commit himself.

On the following day, he went to the bookkeeper recommended by Madame de la Chanterie, agreed with him as to the hours when they were to work together, and so disposed of all his time; for the Abbé de Vèze was to catechise him in the morning, he spent two hours of every day learning book-

keeping, and between breakfast and dinner he worked at the exercises and imaginary commercial correspondence set him by his master.

Some few days thus passed, during which Godefroid learned the charm of a life of which every hour has its employment. The recurrence of the same duties at fixed hours, and perfect regularity, sufficiently account for many happy lives, and prove how deeply the founders of religious orders had meditated on human nature. Godefroid, who had made up his mind to learn of the Abbé de Vèze, had already begun to feel qualms as to his future life, and to discover that he was ignorant of the importance of religious matters.

Finally, day by day, Madame de la Chanterie, with whom he always sat for about an hour after the second breakfast, revealed some fresh treasures of her nature; he had never conceived of goodness so complete, so all-embracing. A woman as old as Madame de la Chanterie seemed to be has none of the triviality of a young woman; she is a friend who may offer you every feminine dainty, who displays all the grace and refinement with which Nature inspires woman to please man, but who no longer asks for a return; she may be execrable or exquisite, for all her demands on life are buried beneath the skin—or are dead; and Madame de la Chanterie was exquisite. She seemed never to have been young; her looks never spoke of the past. Far from allaying his curiosity, Godefroid's increased intimacy with this beautiful character, and the discoveries he made day by day, increased his desire to know something of the previous history of the woman he now saw as a saint. Had she ever loved? Had she been married? Had she been a mother? There was nothing in her suggestive of the old maid; she had all the elegance of a woman of birth; and her strong health, and the extraordinary charm of her conversation, seemed to reveal a heavenly life, a sort of ignorance of the world. Excepting the worthy and cheerful Alain, all these persons had known suffering; but Mon-

sieur Nicolas himself seemed to give the palm of martyrdom to Madame de la Chanterie; nevertheless, the memory of her sorrows was so entirely suppressed by Catholic resignation, and her secret occupations, that she seemed to have been always happy.

"You are the life of your friends," said Godefroid to her one day. "You are the bond that unites them; you are the housekeeper, so to speak, of a great work; and as we are all mortal, I cannot but wonder what would become of your association without you."

"Yes, that is what they fear; but Providence—to whom we owe our bookkeeper," said she with a smile—"will doubtless provide. However, I shall think it over——"

"And will your bookkeeper soon find himself at work on your business?" asked Godefroid, laughing.

"That must depend upon himself," she said with a sweet smile.

"If he is sincerely religious, truly pious, has not the smallest conceit, does not trouble his head about the wealth of the establishment, and endeavors to rise superior to petty social considerations by soaring on the wings God has bestowed on us——"

"Which are they?"

"Simplicity and purity," replied Madame de la Chanterie. "Your ignorance proves that you neglect reading your book," she added, laughing at the innocent trap she had laid to discover whether Godefroid read the "Imitation of Christ." "Soak your mind in Saint Paul's great chapter on Charity. It is not you who will be devoted to us, but we to you," she said with a lofty look, "and it will be your part to keep account of the greatest riches ever possessed by any sovereign; you will have the same enjoyment of them as we have; and let me tell you, if you remember the Thousand and One Nights, that the treasures of Aladdin are as nothing in comparison with ours. Indeed, for a year past, we have

not known what to do; it was too much for us. We needed a bookkeeper."

As she spoke she studied Godefroid's face; he knew not what to think of this strange confidence; but the scene between Madame de la Chanterie and the elder Madame Mongenod had often recurred to him, and he hesitated between doubt and belief.

"Yes, you would be very fortunate!" said she.

Godefroid was so consumed by curiosity, that from that instant he resolved to undermine the reserve of the four friends, and to ask them about themselves. Now, of all Madame de la Chanterie's boarders, the one who most attracted Godefroid, and who was the most fitted in all ways to invite the sympathy of people of every class, was the kindly, cheerful, and unaffected Monsieur Alain. By what means had Providence guided this simple-minded being to this secular convent, where the votaries lived under rules as strictly observed, in perfect freedom and in the midst of Paris, as though they were under the sternest of priors? What drama, what catastrophe, had made him turn aside from his road through the world to take a path so hard to tread across the troubles of a great city?

One evening Godefroid determined to call on his neighbor, with the purpose of satisfying a curiosity which was more excited by the incredibility of any catastrophe in such a man's life than it could have been by the expectation of listening to some terrible episode in the life of a pirate.

On hearing the reply: "Come in," in answer to two modest raps on the door, Godefroid turned the key, which was always in the lock, and found Monsieur Alain seated in his chimney-corner, reading a chapter of the Imitation before going to bed by the light of two wax-candles with green shades, such as whist-players use. The worthy man had on his trousers and a dressing-gown of thick gray flannel; his

feet were raised to the level of the fire on a hassock worked in cross-stitch—as his slippers were also—by Madame de la Chanterie. His striking old head, with its circlet of white hair, almost resembling that of an old monk, stood out, a lighter spot against the brown background of an immense armchair.

Monsieur Alain quietly laid his book, with its worn corners, on the little table with twisted legs, while with the other hand he waved the young man to the second armchair, removing his glasses, which nipped the end of his nose.

"Are you unwell, that you have come down so late?" he asked.

"Dear Monsieur Alain," Godefroid frankly replied, "I am a prey to curiosity which a single word from you will prove to be very innocent or very indiscreet, and that is enough to show you in what spirit I shall venture to ask a question."

"Oh, ho! and what is it?" said he, with an almost mischievous sparkle in his eye.

"What was the circumstance that induced you to lead the life you lead here? For to embrace such a doctrine of utter renunciation a man must be disgusted with the world, must have been deeply wounded, or have wounded others."

"Why, why, my boy?" replied the old man, and his full lips parted in one of those smiles which made his ruddy mouth one of the most affectionate that the genius of a painter could conceive of. "May he not feel touched to the deepest pity by the sight of the woes to be seen within the walls of Paris? Did Saint Vincent de Paul need the goad of remorse or of wounded vanity to devote himself to foundling babes?"

"Such an answer shuts my mouth all the more effectually, because if ever a soul was a match for that of the Christian hero, it is yours," replied Godefroid.

In spite of the thickening given by age to his yellow and wrinkled face, the old man colored crimson, for he might seem to have invited the eulogium, though his well-known

modesty forbade the idea that he had thought of it. Godefroid knew full well that Madame de la Chanterie's guests had no taste for this kind of incense. And yet good Monsieur Alain's guilelessness was more distressed by this scruple than a young maid would have been by some evil suggestion.

"Though I am far from resembling him in spirit," replied Monsieur Alain, "I certainly am like him in appearance——"

Godefroid was about to speak, but was checked by a gesture from the old man, whose nose had in fact the bulbous appearance of the saint's, and whose face, much like that of some old vine-dresser, was the very duplicate of the coarse, common countenance of the founder of the Foundling Hospital. "As to that, you are right," he went on; "my vocation to this work was the result of an impulse of repentance in consequence of an adventure——"

"An adventure! You!" said Godefroid softly, who at this word forgot what he had been about to say.

"Oh, the story I have to tell will seem to you a mere trifle, a foolish business; but before the tribunal of conscience it looked different. If, after having heard me, you persist in your wish to join in our labors, you will understand that feelings are in inverse proportion to our strength of soul, and that a matter which would not trouble a Freethinker may greatly weigh on a feeble Christian."

After this prelude, the neophyte's curiosity had risen to an indescribable pitch. What could be the crime of this good soul whom Madame de la Chanterie had nicknamed her Paschal Lamb? It was as exciting as a book entitled "The Crimes of a Sheep." Sheep, perhaps, are ferocious to the grass and flowers. If we listen to one of the mildest republicans of our day, the best creatures living are cruel to something. But good Monsieur Alain! He, who, like Sterne's Uncle Toby, would not crush a fly when it had stung him twenty times! This beautiful soul—tortured by repentance!

These reflections filled up the pause made by the old man

after he had said, "Listen, then!" and during which he pushed forward the cushion under Godefroid's feet that they might share it.

"I was a little over thirty," said he; "it was in the year '98, so far as I recollect, a time when young men of thirty had the experience of men of sixty. One morning, a little before my breakfast hour at nine o'clock, my old housekeeper announced one of the few friends left to me by the storms of the Revolution. So my first words were to ask him to breakfast. My friend, whose name was Mongenod, a young fellow of eight-and-twenty, accepted, but with some hesitancy. I had not seen him since 1793——"

"Mongenod!" cried Godefroid, "the——?"

"If you want to know the end of the story before the beginning," the old man put in with a smile, "how am I to tell it?"

Godefroid settled himself with an air that promised perfect silence.

"When Mongenod had seated himself," the good man went on, "I observed that his shoes were dreadfully worn. His spotted stockings had been so often washed that it was hard to recognize that they were of silk. His knee-breeches were of nankin-colored kerseymere, so faded as to tell of long wear, emphasized by stains in many places, and their buckles, instead of steel, seemed to me to be of common iron; his shoe-buckles were a match. His flowered white vest, yellow with long use, his shirt with its frayed-pleated frill, revealed extreme though decent poverty. Finally, his coat—a *houppelande*, as we called such a coat, with a single collar like a very short cape—was enough to assure me that my friend had fallen on bad times. This coat of nut-brown cloth, extremely threadbare, and brushed with excessive care, had a rim of grease or powder round the collar, and buttons off which the plating had worn to the copper. In fact, the whole outfit was so wretched that I could not bear to look at it.

His crush hat—a semicircular structure of beaver, which it was then customary to carry under one arm instead of wearing it on the head—must have survived many changes of government.

"However, my friend had no doubt just spent a few sous to have his head dressed by a barber, for he was freshly shaven, and his hair, fastened into a knob with a comb, was luxuriously powdered, and smelt of pomatum. I could see two chains hanging parallel out of his fobs, chains of tarnished steel, but no sign of the watches within. It was winter, but Mongenod had no cloak, for some large drops of melting snow fallen from the eaves under which he had walked for shelter lay on the collar of his coat. When he drew off his rabbit-fur gloves and I saw his right hand, I could perceive the traces of some kind of hard labor.

"Now, his father, an advocate in the higher court, had left him some little fortune—five or six thousand francs a year. I at once understood that Mongenod had come to borrow of me. I had in a certain hiding-place two hundred louis in gold (about one thousand dollars), an enormous sum at that time, when it represented I know not how many hundred thousand francs in paper *assignats*.

"Mongenod and I had been schoolfellows at the Collége des Grassins, and we had been thrown together again in the same lawyer's office—an honest man, the worthy Bordin. When two men have spent their boyhood together and shared the follies of their youth, there is an almost sacred bond of sympathy between them; the man's voice and look stir certain chords in your heart, which never vibrate but to the particular memories that he can rouse. Even if you have some cause to complain of such a comrade, that does not wipe out every claim of friendship, and between us there had not been the slightest quarrel.

"In 1787, when his father died, Mongenod had been a richer man than myself; and though I had never borrowed

from him, I had owed to him certain pleasures which my father's strictness would have prohibited. But for my friend's generosity, I should not have seen the first performance of the 'Marriage of Figaro.'

"Mongenod was at that time what was called a finished gentleman, a man about town and attentive to 'the ladies.' I constantly reproved him for his too great facility in making friends and obliging them; his purse was constantly open, he lived liberally, he would have stood surety for you after meeting you twice. Dear me, dear me! You have started me on reminiscences of my youth!" cried Monsieur Alain, with a bright smile at Godefroid as he paused.

"You are not vexed with me?" said Godefroid.

"No, no. And you may judge by the minute details I am giving you how large a place the event filled in my life. Mongenod, with a good heart and plenty of courage, something of a Voltairean, was inclined to play the fine gentleman," Monsieur Alain went on. "His education at the Grassins, where noblemen's sons were to be met, and his adventures of gallantry, had given him the polish of men of rank, in those days termed Aristocrats. So you may imagine how great was my consternation at observing in Mongenod such signs of poverty as degraded him in my eyes from the elegant young Mongenod I had known in 1787, when my eyes wandered from his face to examine his clothes.

"However, at that time of general public penury, some wily persons assumed an appearance of wretchedness; and as others no doubt had ample reasons for assuming a disguise, I hoped for some explanation, and invited it.

"'What a plight you are in, my dear Mongenod!' said I, accepting a pinch of snuff, which he offered me from a box of imitation gold.

"'Sad enough!' replied he. 'I have but one friend left—and you are that friend. I have done everything in the world to avoid coming to this point, but I have come to ask

you to lend me a hundred louis. It is a large sum,' said he, noticing my surprise, 'but if you lend me no more than fifty, I shall never be able to repay you; whereas, if I should fail in what I am undertaking, I shall still have fifty louis to try some other road to fortune, and I do not yet know what inspiration despair may bring me.'

"'Then, have you nothing?' said I.

"'I have,' said he, hiding a tear, 'just five sous left out of my last piece of silver. To call on you, I had my boots cleaned and my head dressed. I have the clothes on my back. But,' he went on, with a desperate shrug, 'I owe my landlady a thousand crowns in assignats, and the man at the cookstore yesterday refused to trust me. So I have nothing—nothing.'

"'And what do you propose doing?' said I, insistently meddling with his private affairs.

"'To enlist if you refuse to help me.'

"'You, a soldier! You—Mongenod?'

"'I will get killed, or I will be General Mongenod.'

"'Well,' said I, really moved, 'eat your breakfast in peace; I have a hundred louis——'

"And here," said the good man, looking slily at Godefroid, "I thought it necessary to tell a lender's little fib.

"'But it is all I have in the world,' I said to Mongenod. 'I was waiting till the Funds had gone down to the lowest mark to invest my money, but I will place it in your hands, and you may regard me as your partner; I leave it to your conscience to repay me the whole in due time and place. An honest man's conscience,' I added, 'is the best possible security.'

"Mongenod looked hard at me as I spoke, seeming to stamp my words on his heart. He held out his right hand, I gave him my left, and we clasped hands—I, greatly moved, and he, without restraining two tears which now trickled down his thin cheeks. The sight of those tears wrung my heart;

and I was still more unnerved when, forgetful of everything in such a moment, Mongenod, to wipe them away, pulled out a ragged bandana.

"'Wait here,' said I, running off to my hidden store, my heart as full as though I had heard a woman confess that she loved me. I returned with two rolls of fifty louis each.

"'Here—count them.'

"But he would not count them; he looked about him for a writing-table in order, as he said, to give me a receipt. I positively refused to have one.

"'If I were to die,' said I, 'my heirs would worry you. This is a matter between you and me.'

"Finding me so true a friend, Mongenod presently lost the haggard and anxious expression he had worn on entering, and became cheerful. My housekeeper gave us oysters, white wine, an omelette, kidneys *à la brochette* (spitted), and the remains of a Chartres pasty, sent me by my mother; a little dessert, coffee, and West Indian liqueur. Mongenod, who had fasted for two days, was the better for it. We sat till three in the afternoon talking over our life before the Revolution, the best friends in the world.

"Mongenod told me how he had lost his fortune. In the first instance, the reduction of the dividends on the Hôtel de Ville had deprived him of two-thirds of his income, for his father had invested the larger part of his fortune in municipal securities; then, after selling his house in the Rue de Savoie, he had been obliged to accept payment in *assignats;* he had then taken it into his head to run a newspaper, 'La Sentinelle,' and at the end of six months was forced to fly. At the present moment all his hopes hung on the success of a comic opera called 'Les Péruviens.' This last confession made me quake. Mongenod, as an author, having spent his all on the 'Sentinelle,' and living no doubt at the theatre, mixed up with Feydeau's singers, with musicians, and the motley world behind the curtain, did not seem to me like the same, like my

"I AM ALAIN, MONGENOD'S FRIEND."

Mongenod. I shuddered a little. But how could I get back my hundred louis? I could see the two rolls, one in each fob like the barrel of a pistol.

"Mongenod went away. When I found myself alone, no longer face to face with his bitter and cruel poverty, I began to reflect in spite of myself; I was sober again. 'Mongenod,' thought I to myself, 'has no doubt sunk as low as possible; he has acted a little farce for my benefit!' His glee when he saw me calmly hand over so vast a sum now struck me as that of a stage rascal cheating some Géronte. I ended where I ought to have begun, resolved to make some inquiries about my friend Mongenod, who had written his address on the back of a playing-card.

"A feeling of delicacy kept me from going to see him the next day; he might have ascribed my haste to distrust of him. Two days after I found my whole time absorbed by various business; and it was not, in fact, till a fortnight had elapsed that, seeing no more of Mongenod, I made my way from La Croix-Rouge, where I then lived, to the Rue des Moineaux, where he lived.

"Mongenod was lodged in a furnished house of the meanest description; but his landlady was a very decent woman, the widow of a farmer-general who had died on the scaffold. She, completely ruined, had started with a few louis the precarious business of letting rooms. Since then she has rented seven houses in the neighborhood of Saint-Roch and made a fortune.

"'Citizen Mongenod is out,' said she. 'But there is some one at home.'

"This excited my curiosity. I climbed to the sixth floor. A charming young woman opened the door! Oh! A person of exquisite beauty, who, looking at me doubtfully, stood behind the partly opened door.

"'I am Alain,' said I, 'Mongenod's friend.'

"At once the door was wide open, and I went into a hor-

rible garret, which the young woman had, however, kept scrupulously clean. She pushed forward a chair to the hearth piled with ashes, but with no fire, where in one corner I saw a common earthenware foot-warmer. The cold was icy.

"'I am glad, indeed, monsieur,' said she, taking my hands and pressing them warmly, 'to be able to express my gratitude, for you are our deliverer. But for you I might never have seen Mongenod again. He would have—God knows—have thrown himself into the river. He was desperate when he set out to see you.'

"As I looked at the young lady I was greatly astonished to see that she had a handkerchief bound about her head; and below its folds at the back and on the temples there was a sort of black shadow. Studying it attentively, I discovered that her head was shaved.

"'Are you ill?' I asked, noticing this strange fact.

"She glanced at herself in a wretched, dirty pier-glass, and colored, while tears rose to her eyes.

"'Yes, monsieur,' said she hastily; 'I had dreadful headaches; I was obliged to cut off my hair, which fell to my heels——'

"'Have I the honor of speaking to Madame Mongenod?' I asked.

"'Yes, monsieur,' said she, with a really heavenly expression.

"I made my bow to the poor little lady, and went downstairs, intending to make the landlady give me some information, but she was gone out. It struck me that the young woman had sold her hair to buy bread. I went off at once to a wood merchant, and sent in half a load of wood, begging the carter and the sawyers to give the lady a receipted bill in the name of Mongenod.

"And there ends the phase of my life which I long called my foolish stage," said Monsieur Alain, clasping his hands and uplifting them a little with a repentant gesture.

Godefroid could not help smiling; but he was, as will be seen, quite wrong to smile.

"Two days later," the good man went on, "I met one of those men who are neither friends nor strangers—persons whom we see from time to time, in short, an acquaintance, as we say—a Monsieur Barillaud, who, as we happened to speak of 'Les Péruviens,' proclaimed himself a friend of the author's.

"'Thou know'st Citizen Mongenod?' said I—for at that time we were still required by law to address each other with the familiar *tu*," said he to Godefroid in a parenthesis.

"The citizen looked at me," said Monsieur Alain, resuming the thread of his story, and exclaimed—

"'I only wish I had never known him, for he has borrowed money of me many a time, and is so much my friend as not to return it. He is a queer fellow! the best old boy alive, but full of illusions? An imagination of fire. I will do him justice; he does not mean to be dishonest, only as he is always deceiving himself about a thousand things, he is led into conduct that is not altogether straight.'

"'How much does he owe you?'

"'Oh, a few hundred crowns. He is a regular sieve. No one knows where his money goes, for he, perhaps, does not know that himself.'

"'Has he any expedients?'

"'Oh, dear, yes!' said Barillaud, laughing. 'At this moment he is talking of buying up land among the wild men in the United States.'

"I went away with this drop of vitriol shed by slander on my heart to turn all my best feelings sour. I went to call on my old master in the law, who was always my counselor. As soon as I had told him the secret of my loan to Mongenod and the way in which I had acted:

"'What,' cried he, 'is it a clerk of mine that can behave so? You should have put him off a day and have come to me.

Then you would have known that I had shown Mongenod the door. He has already borrowed from me in the course of a year more than a hundred crowns in silver, an enormous sum! And only three days before he went to breakfast with you, he met me in the street and described his misery in such desperate language that I gave him two louis.'

"'Well, if I am the dupe of a clever actor, so much the worse for him rather than for me!' said I. 'But what is to be done?'

"'At any rate, you must try to get some acknowledgment out of him, for a debtor however worthless may recover himself, and then you may be paid.'

"Thereupon Bordin took out of one of the drawers of his table a wrapper on which was written the name of Mongenod; he showed me three acknowledgments, each for a hundred livres.

"'The first time he comes,' said he, 'I shall make him add on the interest and the two louis I gave him, and whatever money he asks for; and then he must sign an acceptance and a statement, saying that interest accrues from the day of the first loan. That, at any rate, will be all in order; I shall find some means of getting paid.'

"'Well, then,' said I to Bordin, 'cannot you put me as much in order as yourself? For you are an honest man, and what you do will be right.'

"'In this way I remain the master of the field,' replied the lawyer. 'When a man behaves as you have done, he is at the mercy of another who may simply make game of him. Now I don't choose to be laughed at. A retired public prosecutor of the Châtelet! Bless me, what next? Every man to whom you lend money as recklessly as you lent it to Mongenod, sooner or later thinks of it as his own. It is no longer your money; it is his money; you are his creditor, a very inconvenient person. The debtor then tries to be quit of you by a compromise with his conscience, and seventy-five out

of every hundred will try to avoid meeting you again to the end of his days——'

"'Then you look for no more than twenty-five per cent. of honest men?'

"'Did I say so?' said he, with an ironical smile. 'That is a large allowance!'

"A fortnight later I had a note from Bordin desiring me to call on him to fetch my receipt. I went.

"'I tried to snatch back fifty louis for you,' said he. I had told him all about my conversation with Mongenod. 'But the birds are flown. You may say good-by to your yellow-boys! Your canary-birds have fled to warmer climes. We have a very cunning rascal to deal with. Did he not assure me that his wife and his father-in-law had set out for the United States with sixty of your louis to buy land, and that he intended to join them there? To make a fortune, as he said, so as to return to pay his debts, of which he handed me the schedule drawn out in due form; for he begged me to keep myself informed as to what became of his creditors. Here is the schedule,' added Bordin, showing me a wrapper on which was noted the total. 'Seventeen thousand francs in hard cash! With such a sum as that a house might be bought worth two thousand crowns a year.'

"After replacing the packet, he gave me a bill of exchange for a sum equivalent to a hundred louis in gold, stated in assignats, with a letter in which Mongenod acknowledged the debt with interest on a hundred louis d'or.

"'So now I am all safe?' said I to Bordin.

"'He will not deny the debt,' replied my old master. 'But where there are no effects, even the King—that is to say, the Directory—has no rights.'

"I thereupon left him. Believing myself to have been robbed by a trick that evades the law, I withdrew my esteem from Mongenod, and was very philosophically resigned.

"It is not without a reason that I dwell on these common-

place and apparently unimportant details," the good man went on, looking at Godefroid. "I am trying to show you how I was led to act as most men act, blindly, and in contempt of certain rules which even savages do not disregard in the most trifling matters. Many men would justify themselves by the authority of Bordin; but at this day I feel that I had no excuse. As soon as we are led to condemn one of our fellows, and to refuse him our esteem for life, we ought to rely solely on our own judgment—and even then!—ought we to set up our own feelings as a tribunal before which to arraign our neighbor? Where would the law be? What should be our standard of merit? Would not a weakness in me be strength in my neighbor? So many men, so many different circumstances would there be for each deed; for there are no two identical sets of conditions in human existence. Society alone has the right of reproving its members; for I do not grant it that of punishing them. A mere reprimand is sufficient and brings with it cruelty enough.

"So as I listened to the haphazard opinions of a Parisian, admiring my former teacher's acumen, I condemned Mongenod," the good man went on, after drawing from his narrative this noble moral.

"The performance of 'Les Péruviens' was announced. I expected to have a ticket for the first night; I conceived myself in some way his superior. As a result of his indebtedness, my friend seemed to me a vassal who owed me many things beside the interest on my money. We are all alike!

"Not only did Mongenod send me no ticket, but I saw him at a distance coming along the dark passage under the Theatre Feydeau, well dressed—nay, almost elegant; he affected not to see me; then, when he had passed me, and I thought I would run after him, he had vanished down some cross-passage. This irritated me extremely; and my annoyance, far from being transient and subsiding, only increased as time went on.

"This was why. A few days after this incident I wrote to Mongenod much in these words:

"'MY FRIEND:—You should not regard me as indifferent to anything that can happen to you, whether for good or ill. Does the "Péruviens" come up to your expectations? You forgot me—you had every right to do so—at the first performance, when I should have applauded you heartily! However, I hope, all the same, that you may find Peru in the piece, for I can invest my capital, and I count on you when the bill falls due. Your friend,

"'ALAIN.'

"After waiting for two weeks and receiving no answer, I called in the Rue des Moineaux. The landlady told me that the little wife had, in fact, set out with her father, at the date named by Mongenod to Bordin. Mongenod always left his garret early in the morning, and did not come in till late at night. Another fortnight passed; I wrote another letter in these terms:

"'MY DEAR MONGENOD:—I see nothing of you; you do not answer my notes; I cannot at all understand your conduct; and if I were to behave so to you, what would you think of me?'

"I did not sign myself 'Your friend.' I wrote 'With best regards.'

"A month slipped by; no news of Mongenod. The 'Péruviens' had not obtained so great a success as Mongenod had counted on. I paid for a seat at the twentieth performance, and I found a small house. And yet Madame Scio was very fine in it. I was told in the green-room that there would be a few more performances of the piece. I went seven times to call on Mongenod; he was never at home, and

each time I left my name with the landlady. So then I wrote again:

"'Monsieur, if you do not wish to lose my respect after forfeiting my friendship, you will henceforth treat me as a stranger—that is to say, with civility—and you will tell me whether you are prepared to pay me when your note of hand falls due. I shall act in accordance with your reply. Yours faithfully, ALAIN.'

"No reply. It was now 1799; a year had elapsed all but two months.

"When the bill fell due I went to see Bordin. Bordin took the note of hand, and then began legal proceedings. The reverses experienced by the French armies had had such a depressing effect on the Funds that five francs a year could be purchased for seven francs. Thus, for a hundred louis in gold, I might have had nearly fifteen hundred francs a year. Every morning, as I read the paper over my cup of coffee, I would exclaim—

"'Confound that Mongenod! But for him, I could have a thousand crowns a year!'

"Mongenod had become my chronic aversion; I thundered at him even when I was walking in the street.

"'Bordin is after him!' said I to myself. 'He will catch him—and serve him right!'

"My rage expended itself in imprecations; I cursed the man; I believed him capable of any crime. Yes, Monsieur Barillaud was quite right in what he said.

"Well, one morning my debtor walked in, no more disconcerted than if he had not owed me a centime; and I, when I saw him, I felt all the shame that should have been his. I was like a criminal caught in the act; I was quite ill at ease. The 18th of Brumaire* was past, everything was going on

* Second month of the Republican Kalendar, Oct. 25 to Nov. 21.

well, and Bonaparte had set out to fight the battle of Marengo.

"'It is unlucky, monsieur,' said I, 'that I should owe your visit solely to the intervention of a bailiff.'

"Mongenod took a chair and sat down.

"'I have come to tell you,' said he, with the familiar *tu*, 'that I cannot possibly pay you.'

"'You have lost me the chance of investing my money before the arrival of the First Consul—at that time I could have made a little fortune——'

"'I know it, Alain,' said he; 'I know it. But what will you get by prosecuting me for debt and plunging me deeper by loading me with costs? I have letters from my father-in-law and my wife; they have bought some land and sent me the bill for the necessaries of the house; I have had to spend all I had in those purchases. Now, and nobody can hinder me—I mean to sail by a Dutch vessel from Flushing, whither I have sent all my small possessions. Bonaparte has won the battle of Marengo, peace will be signed, and I can join my family without fear—for my dear little wife was expecting a baby.'

"'And so you have sacrificed me to your own interests?' cried I.

"'Yes,' said he; 'I thought you my friend.'

"At that moment I felt small as compared to Mongenod, so sublime did that speech seem to me, so simple and grand.

"'Did I not tell you so,' he went on; 'was I not absolutely frank with you—here, on this very spot? I came to you, Alain, as being the only man who would appreciate me. Fifty louis would be wasted, I told you; but if you lent me a hundred, I would repay them. I fixed no date, for how can I tell when my long struggle with poverty will come to an end? You were my last friend. All my friends, even our old master Bordin, despised me simply because I wanted to borrow money of them. Oh! Alain, you can never know the

dreadful feelings that grip the heart of an honest man fighting misfortune when he goes into another man's house to ask for help! and all that follows—— I hope you may never know them; they are worse than the anguish of death!

"'You have written me certain letters which, from me under similar circumstances, would have struck you as odious. You expected things of me that were out of my power. You are the only man to whom I attempt to justify myself. In spite of your severity, and though you ceased to be my friend and became only my creditor from the day when Bordin asked me for an acknowledgment of your loan, thus discrediting the handsome agreement we ourselves had come to, here, shaking hands on it with tears in our eyes! Well, I have forgotten everything but that morning's work.

"'It is in memory of that hour that I have come now to say, "You know not what misfortune is; do not rail at it! I have not had an hour, not a second, to write you in reply! Perhaps you would have liked me to come and pay you compliments? You might as well expect a hare, harassed by dogs and hunters, to rest in a clearing and crop the grass! I sent you no ticket! No; I had not enough to satisfy those on whom my fate depended. A novice in the theatrical world, I was the prey of musicians, actors, singers, the orchestra. To enable me to join my family over seas, and buy what they need, I sold the 'Péruviens' to the manager with two other pieces I had in my desk. I am setting out for Holland without a sou. I shall eat dry bread on my journey till I reach Flushing. I have paid my passage, and have nothing more. But for my landlady's compassion, and her trust in me, I should have had to walk to Flushing with a knapsack on my back. And so, in spite of your doubting me, as, but for you, I could not have sent my father-in-law and my wife to New York, I am entirely grateful." No, *Monsieur* Alain, I will not forget that the hundred louis you lent me might at this time be yielding you an income of fifteen hundred francs.'

"'I would fain believe you, Mongenod,' said I, almost convinced by the tone in which he poured out this explanation.

"'At any rate, you no longer address me as monsieur,' said he eagerly, and looking at me with emotion. 'God knows I should quit France with less regret if I could leave one man behind me in whose eyes I was neither half a rogue, nor a spendthrift, nor a victim to illusions. A man who can love truly, Alain, is never wholly despicable.'

"At these words I held out my hand; he took it and pressed it.

"'Heaven protect you!' said I.

"'We are still friends?' he asked.

"'Yes,' I replied; 'it shall never be said that my schoolfellow, the friend of my youth, set out for America under the ban of my anger!——'

"Mongenod embraced me with tears in his eyes, and rushed off to the door.

"When I met Bordin a few days afterward, I told him the story of our interview, and he replied with a smile—

"'I only hope it was not all part of the performance! He did not ask you for anything?'

"'No,' said I.

"'He came to me, too, and I was almost as weak as you; but he asked me for something to get food on the way. However, he who lives will see!'

"This remark of Bordin's made me fear lest I had yielded stupidly to an impulse of feeling.

"'Still, he too, the public prosecutor, did the same,' said I to myself.

"It is unnecessary, I think, to explain to you how I lost all my fortune excepting the other hundred louis, which I invested in Government securities when prices had risen so high that I had barely five hundred francs a year to live upon by the time I was four-and-thirty. By Bordin's interest I obtained an appointment at eight hundred francs a year in a

branch of the Mont de Piété (the State pawn-office), Rue des Petits Augustins. I lived in the humblest way; I lodged on the fourth floor of a house in the Rue des Marais, in an apartment consisting of two rooms and a closet, for two hundred and fifty francs. I went out to dinner in a boarding-house where there was an open table, and for this I paid forty francs a month. In the evening I did some copying. Ugly as I am, and very poor, I had to give up all ideas of marriage——"

As he heard this verdict pronounced on himself by poor Alain in a tone of angelic resignation, Godefroid gave a little start, which proved better than any speech could have done the similarity of their fate; and the good man, in reply to this eloquent gesture, seemed to pause for his hearer to speak.

"And no one ever loved you?" asked Godefroid.

"No one," he replied, "excepting madame, who returns to each of us alike our love for her—a love I might almost call divine. You must have seen it; we live in her life, as she lives in ours; we have but one soul among us; and though our enjoyments are not physical, they are none the less very intense, for we live only through the heart. How can we help it, my dear boy? By the time women are capable of appreciating moral qualities, they have done with externals, and are growing old. I have suffered much, I can tell you!"

"Ah! that is the stage I am at——" said Godefroid.

"Under the Empire," the old man went on, bowing his head, "dividends were not very punctually paid; we had to be prepared for deferred payment. From 1802 to 1814 not a week passed that I did not ascribe my difficulties to Mongenod: 'But for Mongenod,' I used to think, 'I might have been married. But for him I should not be obliged to live in privation.' But sometimes, too, I would say to myself, 'Perhaps the poor man is pursued by ill-luck out there!'

"In 1806, one day when I found my life a heavy burden to bear, I wrote him a long letter that I dispatched *via* Holland. I had no answer; and for three years I waited, found-

ing hopes on that reply which were constantly deceived. At last I resigned myself to my fate. To my five hundred francs of dividends, and twelve hundred francs of salary from the Mont de Piété, for it was raised, I added five hundred for my work as bookkeeper to a perfumer, Monsieur Birotteau. Thus I not only made both ends meet, but I saved eight hundred francs a year. By the beginning of 1814, I was able to invest nine thousand francs of savings in the funds, buying at forty; thus I had secured sixteen hundred francs a year for my old age. So then, with fifteen hundred francs a year from the Mont de Piété, six hundred as a bookkeeper, and sixteen hundred in dividends, I had an income of three thousand seven hundred francs. I took rooms in the Rue de Seine, and lived in rather more comfort.

"My position brought me into contact with many of the very poor. For twelve years I have known, better than any one, what the misery of the world is; once or twice I have helped some poor creatures; and I felt the keenest pleasure when, out of ten that I had assisted, one or two families were rescued from their difficulties.

"It struck me that true beneficence did not consist in throwing money to the sufferers. Being charitable, in the common phrase, often appeared to me to be a sort of premium on crime. I set to work to study this question. I was by this time fifty years old, and my life was drawing to a close.

"'What good am I in the world?' I asked myself. 'To whom can I leave my money? When I shall have furnished my rooms handsomely, have secured a good cook, have made my life suitably comfortable, what am I to do with my time?'

"For eleven years of revolutions and fifteen years of poverty had wasted the happiest part of my life, had consumed it in labors that were fruitless, or devoted solely to the preservation of my person! At such an age no one can make an obscure and penurious youth the starting-point to reach a brilliant position; but every one may make himself useful. I

understood, in short, that a certain supervision and much good advice would increase tenfold the value of money given, for the poor always need guidance to enable them to profit by the work they do for others, it is not the intelligence of the speculator that is wanting to deceive them.

"A few happy results that I achieved made me extremely proud. I discerned both an aim and an occupation, to say nothing of the exquisite pleasure to be derived from playing the part of Providence, even on the smallest scale."

"And you now play it on a large scale?" said Godefroid eagerly.

"Oh, you want to know too much!" said the old man. "Nay, nay. Would you believe it," he went on after a pause, "the smallness of the means at my command constantly brought my thoughts back to Mongenod?

"'But for Mongenod I could have done so much more,' I used to reflect. 'If a dishonest man had not robbed me of fifteen hundred francs a year,' I often thought, 'I could have helped this or that family.'

"Thus excusing my inability by such an accusation, those to whom I gave nothing but words to comfort them joined me in cursing Mongenod. These maledictions were balm to my heart.

"One morning, in January, 1816, my housekeeper announced—whom do you think?—Mongenod. Monsieur Mongenod. And who should walk in but the pretty wife, now six-and-thirty, accompanied by three children; then came Mongenod, younger than when he left, for wealth and happiness shed a glory on those they favor. He had gone away lean, pale, yellow, and haggard; he had come back fat and well-liking, as flourishing as a prebendary, and well dressed. He threw himself into my arms, and, finding himself coldly welcomed, his first words were—

"'Could I come any sooner, my friend? The seas have only been open since 1815, and it took me eighteen months to

realize my property, close my accounts, and call in my assets. I have succeeded, my friend! When I received your letter in 1806, I set out in a Dutch vessel to bring you home a little fortune; but the union of Holland with the French Empire led to our being taken by the English, who transported me to the coast of Jamaica, whence by good-luck I escaped.

"'On my return to New York I was a victim to bankruptcy; for Charlotte, during my absence, had not known how to be on her guard against swindlers. So I was compelled to begin again to accumulate a fortune.

"'However, here we are at last. From the way the children look at you, you may suppose that they have often heard of the benefactor of the family.'

"'Yes, indeed,' said pretty Madame Mongenod, 'we never passed a day without speaking of you. Your share has been allowed for in every transaction. We have longed for the happiness we enjoy at this moment of offering you your fortune, though we have never for a moment imagined that this "rector's tithe" can pay our debt of gratitude.'

"And, as she spoke, Madame Mongenod offered me the beautiful casket you see there, which contained a hundred and fifty thousand-franc notes.

"'You have suffered much, my dear Alain, I know; but we could imagine all your sufferings, and we racked our brains to find means of sending you money, but without success,' Mongenod went on. 'You tell me you could not marry; but here is our eldest daughter. She has been brought up in the idea that she should be your wife, and she has five hundred thousand francs——'

"'God forbid that I should wreck her happiness!' cried I, as I beheld a girl as lovely as her mother had been at her age; and I drew her to me, and kissed her forehead.

"'Do not be afraid, my pretty child,' said I. 'A man of fifty and a girl of seventeen—and so ugly an old fellow as I! Never!'

"'Monsieur,' said she, 'my father's benefactor can never seem ugly in my eyes.'

"This speech, made with spontaneous candor, showed me that all Mongenod had told me was true. I offered him my hand, and we fell into each other's arms once more.

"'My friend,' said I, 'I have often abused you, cursed you——'

"'You had every right, Alain,' replied he, reddening. 'You were in poverty through my fault——'

"I took Mongenod's papers out of a box and restored them to him, after canceling his note of hand.

"'Now, you will all breakfast with me,' said I to the family party.

"'On condition of your dining with my wife as soon as we are settled,' said Mongenod, 'for we arrived only yesterday. We are going to buy a house, and I am about to open a bank in Paris for North American business to leave to that youngster,' he said, pointing to his eldest son, a lad of about fifteen years.

"We spent the afternoon together, and in the evening we all went to the theatre, for Mongenod and his party were dying to see a play. Next day I invested in the Funds, and had then an income of about fifteen thousand francs in all. This released me from bookkeeping in the evening, and allowed me to give up my appointment, to the great satisfaction of all my subordinates.

"My friend died in 1827, after founding the banking-house of Mongenod & Co., which made immense profits on the first loans issued at the time of the Restoration. His daughter, to whom he subsequently gave about a million of francs, married the Vicomte de Fontaine. The son whom you know is not yet married; he lives with his mother and his younger brother. We find them ready with all the money we may need.

"Frédéric—for his father, in America, had named him after

me—Frédéric Mongenod, at seven-and-thirty, is one of the most skillful and respected bankers in Paris.

"Not very long since Madame Mongenod confessed to me that she had sold her hair for two crowns of six livres to be able to buy some bread. She gives twenty-four loads of wood every year, which I distribute among the poor, in return for the half-load I once sent her."

"Then this accounts for your connection with the house of Mongenod," said Godefroid. "And your fortune——"

The old man still looked at Godefroid with the same expression of mild irony.

"Pray go on," said Godefroid, seeing by Monsieur Alain's manner that he had more to say.

"This conclusion, my dear Godefroid, made the deepest impression on me. Though the man who had suffered so much, though my friend had forgiven me my injustice, I could not forgive myself."

"Oh!" said Godefroid.

"I determined to devote all my surplus income, about ten thousand francs a year, to acts of rational beneficence," Monsieur Alain calmly went on. "At about that time I met an examining judge of the department of the Seine named Popinot, whose death we mourned three years ago, and who for fifteen years practiced the most enlightened charity in the Saint-Marcel quarter. He, in concert with the venerable vicar of Notre-Dame and with madame, planned the work in which we are all engaged, and which, since 1823, has secretly effected some good results.

"This work has found a soul in Madame de la Chanterie; she is really the very spirit of the undertaking. The vicar has succeeded in making us more religious than we were at first, demonstrating the necessity for being virtuous ourselves if we desire to inspire virtue—for preaching, in fact, by example. And the further we progress in that path, the happier we are among ourselves. Thus it was my repentance

for having misprized the heart of my boyhood's friend which led me to the idea of devoting to the poor, through myself, the fortune he brought home to me, which I accepted without demurring to the vast sum repaid to me for so small a loan; the application of it made it right."

This narrative, devoid of all emphasis, and told with touching simplicity of tone, gesture, and expression, would have been enough to make Godefroid resolve on joining in this noble and saintly work, if he had not already intended it.

"You know little of the world," said Godefroid, "if you had such scruples over a thing which would never have weighed on any other conscience."

"I know only the wretched," replied the good man. "I have no wish to know a world where men misjudge each other with so little compunction. Now, it is nearly midnight, and I have to meditate on my chapter of the Imitation. Good-night."

Godefroid took the kind old man's hand and pressed it with an impulse of genuine admiration.

"Can you tell me Madame de la Chanterie's history?" asked Godefroid.

"It would be impossible without her permission, for it is connected with one of the most terrible incidents of imperial politics. I first knew madame through my friend Bordin; he knew all the secrets of that beautiful life; and it was he who led me, so to speak, to this house."

"At any rate, then," said Godefroid, "I thank you for having told me your life; it contains a lesson for me."

"Do you discern its moral?"

"Nay, tell it me," said Godefroid; "for I might see it differently to you——"

"Well, then," said the good man, "pleasure is but an accident in the life of the Christian; it is not his aim and end—and we learn this too late."

"What then happens when we are converted?" asked Godefroid.

"Look there!" said Alain, and he pointed to an inscription in letters of gold on a black ground, which the new-comer had not seen before, as this was the first time he had ever been into his companion's rooms. He turned round and read the words: TRANSIRE BENEFACIENDO.

"That, my son, is the meaning we then find in life. That is our motto. If you become one of us, that constitutes your brevet. We read that text and take it as our counsel at every hour of the day, when we rise, when we go to bed, while we dress. Oh! if you could but know what infinite happiness is to be found in carrying out that device!"

"In what way?" said Godefroid, hoping for some explanations.

"In the first place, we are as rich as Baron de Nucingen. But the Imitation prohibits our calling anything our own; we are but stewards; and if we feel a single impulse of pride, we are not worthy to be stewards. That would not be *transire benefaciendo;* it would be enjoyment in thought. If you say to yourself, with a certain dilation of the nostrils, 'I am playing the part of Providence'—as you might have thought this morning, if you had been in my place, giving new life to a whole family, you are a Sardanapalus at once—and wicked! Not one of our members ever thinks of himself when doing good. You must cast off all vanity, all pride, all self-consciousness; and it is difficult, I can tell you."

Godefroid bid Monsieur Alain good-night, and went to his own rooms, much moved by this story; but his curiosity was excited rather than satisfied, for the chief figure in the picture of this domestic scene was Madame de la Chanterie. This woman's history was to him so supremely interesting that he made the knowledge of it the first aim of his stay in the house. He understood that the purpose for which these

five persons were associated was some great charitable endeavor; but he thought much less of that than of its heroine.

The neophyte spent some days in studying these choice spirits, amid whom he found himself, with greater attention than he had hitherto devoted to them; and he became the subject of a moral phenomenon which modern philanthropists have overlooked, from ignorance perhaps. The sphere in which he lived had a direct influence on Godefroid. The law which governs physical nature in respect to the influence of atmospheric conditions on the lives of the beings subject to them, also governs moral nature; whence it is to be inferred that the collecting in masses of the criminal class is one of the greatest social crimes, while absolute isolation is an experiment of which the success is very doubtful. Condemned felons ought, therefore, to be placed in religious institutions and surrounded with prodigies of goodness instead of being left among marvels of evil. The church may be looked to for perfect devotion to this cause; for if she is ready to send missionaries to barbarous or savage nations, how gladly would she charge her religious orders with the mission of rescuing and instructing the savages of civilized life! Every criminal is an atheist—often without knowing it.

Godefroid found his five companions endowed with the qualities they demanded of him; they were all free from pride or vanity, all truly humble and pious, devoid of the pretentiousness which constitutes "devoutness" in the invidious sense of the word. These virtues were contagious; he was filled with the desire to imitate these obscure heroes, and he ended by studying with ardor the book he had at first scorned. Within a fortnight he had reduced life to its simplest expression, to what it really is when regarded from the lofty point of view to which the religious spirit leads us. Finally, his curiosity, at first purely worldly and roused by many vulgar motives, became rarefied. He did not cease to be curious; it

would have been difficult to lose all interest in the life of Madame de la Chanterie; but, without intending it, he showed a reserve which was fully appreciated by these men, in whom the Holy Spirit had developed wonderful depths of mind, as happens, indeed, with all who devote themselves to a religious life. The concentration of the moral powers, by whatever means or system, increases their scope tenfold.

"Our young friend is not yet a convert," said the good Abbé de Vèze; "but he wishes to be."

An unforeseen circumstance led to the revelation of Madame de la Chanterie's history, so that his intense interest in it was soon satisfied.

Paris was just then engrossed by the investigation of the case of the Saint-Jacques barrier, one of those hideous trials which mark the history of our assizes. The trial derived its interest from the criminals themselves, whose daring and general superiority to ordinary culprits, with their cynical contempt for justice, really appalled the public. It was a noteworthy fact that no newspaper ever entered the Hôtel de la Chanterie, and Godefroid only heard of the rejection of the appeal to the Supreme Court from his master in bookkeeping; the trial had taken place long before he came to Madame de la Chanterie.

"Do you ever meet with such men as these atrocious scoundrels?" he asked his new friends. "Or, when you do, how do you deal with them?"

"In the first place," said Monsieur Nicolas, "there is no such thing as an atrocious scoundrel; there are mad creatures fit only for the asylum at Charenton; but with the exception of those rare pathological exceptions, what we find are simply men without religion, or who argue falsely, and the task of the charitable is to set souls upright and bring the erring into the right way."

"And to the apostle all things are possible," said the Abbé de Vèze; "he has God on his side."

"If you were sent to these two condemned men," said Godefroid, "you could do nothing with them."

"There would not be time," observed Monsieur Alain very seriously.

"As a rule," said Monsieur Nicolas, "the souls handed over to be dealt with by the church are in utter impenitence, and the time is too short for miracles to be wrought. The men of whom you are speaking, if they had fallen into our hands, would have been men of mark; their energy is immense; but when once they have committed murder, it is impossible to do anything for them; human justice has taken possession of them——"

"Then you are averse to capital punishment?" said Godefroid.

Monsieur Nicolas hastily rose and left the room.

"Never speak of capital punishment in the presence of Monsieur Nicolas. He once recognized in a criminal, whose execution it was his duty to superintend, a natural child of his own——"

"And who was innocent!" added Monsieur Joseph.

At this moment Madame de la Chanterie, who had not been in the room, came in.

"Still, you must allow," Godefroid went on, addressing Monsieur Joseph, "that society cannot exist without capital punishment, and that these men, whose heads——"

Godefroid felt his mouth suddenly closed by a strong hand, and the Abbé de Vèze led away Madame de la Chanterie, pale and half-dead.

"What have you done?" cried Monsieur Joseph. "Take him away, Alain," he said, removing the hand with which he had gagged Godefroid; and he followed the Abbé de Vèze into madame's room.

"Come with me," said Alain to Godefroid. "You have compelled us to tell you the secrets of Madame de la Chanterie's life."

In a few minutes the two friends were together in Monsieur Alain's room, as they had been when the old man had told Godefroid his own history.

"Well?" said Godefroid, whose face sufficiently showed his despair at having been the cause of what might be called a catastrophe in this pious household.

"I am waiting till Manon shall have come to say how she is going on," replied the good man as he heard the woman's step on the stairs.

"Monsieur, madame is better. Monsieur l'Abbé managed to deceive her as to what had been said," and Manon shot a wrathful glance at Godefroid.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed the unhappy young man, his eyes filling with tears.

"Come, sit down," said Monsieur Alain, seating himself. Then he paused to collect his thoughts.

"I do not know," said the kind old man, "that I have the talent necessary to give a worthy narrative of a life so cruelly tried. You must forgive me if you find the words of so poor a speaker inadequate to the magnitude of the events and catastrophes. You must remember that it is a very long time since I was at school, and that I date from a time when thoughts were held of more importance than effect—from a prosaic age, when we knew not how to speak of things except by their names."

Godefroid bowed with an expression of assent, in which his worthy old friend could discern his sincere admiration, and which plainly said, "I am listening."

"As you have just perceived, my young friend, it would be impossible for you to remain one of us without learning some of the particulars of that saintly woman's life. There are certain ideas, allusions, words, which are absolutely prohibited in this house, since they inevitably reopen wounds, of which the anguish might kill madame if it were once or twice revived——"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Godefroid, "what have I done?"

"But for Monsieur Joseph, who happily interrupted you just as you were about to speak of the awful instrument of death, you would have annihilated the poor lady. It is time that you should be told all; for you will be one of us, of that we are all convinced.

"Madame de la Chanterie," he went on after a short pause, "is descended from one of the first families of Lower Normandy. Her maiden name was Mademoiselle Barbe-Philiberte de Champignelles—of a younger branch of that house; and she was intended to take the veil unless a marriage could be arranged for her with the usual renunciations of property that were commonly required in poor families of high rank. A certain Sieur de la Chanterie, whose family had sunk into utter obscurity, though dating from the time of Philippe-Auguste's crusade, was anxious to recover the rank to which so ancient a name gave him a claim in the province of Normandy. But he had fallen quite from his high estate, for he had made money—some three hundred thousand francs—by supplying the commissariat for the army at the time of the war with Hanover. His son, trusting too much to this wealth, which provincial rumor magnified, was living in Paris in a way calculated to cause the father of a family very great uneasiness and alarm.

"Mademoiselle de Champignelles' great merits became famous throughout the district of le Bessin; and the old man, whose little estate of la Chanterie lay between Caen and Saint-Lô, heard some expressions of regret that so accomplished a young lady, and one so capable of making a husband happy, should end her days in a convent. On his uttering a wish to seek her out, some hope was given him that he might obtain the hand of Mademoiselle Philiberte for his son if he were content to renounce any marriage portion. He went to Bayeux, contrived to have two or three meetings with the

Champignelles family, and was fascinated by the young lady's noble qualities.

"At the age of sixteen, Mademoiselle de Champignelles gave promise of what she would become. She evinced well-founded piety, sound good-sense, inflexible rectitude—one of those natures which will never veer in its affections even if they are the outcome of duty. The old nobleman, enriched by his somewhat illicit gains, discerned in this charming girl a wife who might keep his son in order by the authority of virtue and the ascendency of a character that was firm but not rigid; for, as you have seen, no one can be gentler than Madame de la Chanterie. Then, no one could be more confiding; even in the decline of life she has the candor of innocence; in her youth she would not believe in evil; such distrust as you may have seen in her she owes to her misfortunes. The old man pledged himself to the Champignelles to give them a discharge in full for the portion legitimately due to Mademoiselle Philiberte on the signing of the marriage-contract; in return, the Champignelles, who were connected with the greatest families, promised to have the feof of la Chanterie created a barony, and they kept their word. The bridegroom's aunt, Madame de Boisfrelon, the wife of the councilor to the Parlement who died in your rooms, promised to leave her fortune to her nephew.

"When all these arrangements were completed between the two families, the father sent for his son. This young man, at the time of his marriage, was five-and-twenty, and already a master of appeals; he had indulged in numerous follies with the young gentlemen of the time, living in their style; and the old army contractor had several times paid his debts to a considerable amount. The poor father, foreseeing further dissipation on his son's part, was only too glad to settle a part of his fortune on his daughter-in-law; but he was so cautious as to entail the estate of la Chanterie on the heirs male of the marriage——

"A precaution," added Monsieur Alain in a parenthesis, "which the Revolution made useless."

"As handsome as an angel, and wonderfully skilled in all athletic exercises, the young master of appeals had immense powers of charming," he went on. "So Mademoiselle de Champignelles, as you may easily imagine, fell very much in love with her husband. The old man, made very happy by this promising beginning, and hoping that his son was a reformed character, sent the young couple to Paris. This was early in 1788. For nearly a year they were perfectly happy. Madame de la Chanterie was the object of all the little cares, the most delicate attentions that a devoted lover can lavish on the one and only woman he loves. Brief as it was, the honeymoon beamed brightly on the heart of the noble and unfortunate lady.

"As you know, in those days mothers all nursed their infants themselves. Madame de la Chanterie had a daughter. This time, when a wife ought to be the object of double devotion on her husband's part, was, on the contrary, the beginning of dreadful woes. The master of appeals was obliged to sell everything he could spare to pay old debts which he had not confessed, and more recent gambling debts. Then, suddenly the National Assembly dissolved the Supreme Council and the Parlement, and abolished all the great law appointments that had been so dearly purchased. Thus the young couple, with the addition of their child, had no income to rely on but the revenues from the entailed estate, and from the portion settled on Madame de la Chanterie. Twenty months after her marriage this charming woman, at the age of seventeen and a half, found herself reduced to maintaining herself and the child at her breast by the work of her hands, in an obscure street where she hid herself. She then found herself absolutely deserted by her husband, who fell step by step into the society of the very lowest kind. Never did she blame her husband, never did she put him in

the least in the wrong. She has told us that all through the worst time she prayed to God for her dear Henri.

"The rascal's name was Henri," remarked Monsieur Alain. "It is a name that must never be spoken here, any more than that of Henriette. To proceed:

"Madame de la Chanterie, who never quitted her little room in the Rue de la Corderie-du-Temple unless to buy food or fetch her work, kept her head above water, thanks partly to an allowance of a hundred francs a month from her father-in-law, who was touched by so much virtue. However, the poor young wife, foreseeing that this support might fail her, had taken up the laborious work of a staymaker, and worked for a famous dressmaker. In fact, ere long the old contractor died, and his estate was consumed by his son under favor of the overthrow of the Monarchy.

"The erewhile master of appeals, now one of the most savage of all the presidents of the revolutionary tribunal, had become a terror in Normandy, and could indulge all his passions. Then, imprisoned in his turn on the fall of Robespierre, the hatred of the department condemned him to inevitable death. Madame de la Chanterie received a farewell letter announcing her husband's fate. She immediately placed her little girl in the care of a neighbor, and went off to the town where the wretch was in confinement, taking with her a few louis, which constituted her whole fortune. This money enabled her to get into the prison. She succeeded in helping her husband to escape, dressing him in clothes of her own, under circumstances very similar to those which not long after favored Madame de la Valette. She was condemned to death, but the authorities were ashamed to carry out this act of revenge, and she was secretly released with the connivance of the Court over which her husband had formerly presided. She got back to Paris on foot without any money, sleeping at farmhouses, and often fed by charity."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Godefroid.

"Wait," said the old man, "that was nothing. In the course of eight years the poor woman saw her husband three times. The first time the gentleman spent twenty-four hours in his wife's humble lodgings, and went away with all her money, after heaping on her every mark of affection, and leading her to believe in his complete reformation. 'For I could not resist,' said she, 'a man for whom I prayed every day, and who filled my thoughts exclusively.' The second time Monsieur de la Chanterie came in a dying state, and from some horrible disease! She nursed him, and saved his life; then she tried to reclaim him to decent feeling and a seemly life. After promising everything this angel begged of him, the revolutionary relapsed into hideous debaucheries, and in fact only escaped prosecution by the authorities by taking refuge in his wife's rooms, where he died unmolested.

"Still, all this was nothing!" said Alain, seeing dismay in Godefroid's face.

"No one in the world he had mixed with had known that the man was married. Two years after the miserable creature's death, she heard that there was a second Madame de la Chanterie, widowed and ruined like herself. The bigamous villain had found two such angels incapable of betraying him. Toward 1803," the old man went on after a pause, "Monsieur de Boisfrelon, Madame de la Chanterie's uncle, having his name removed from the list of proscribed persons, came back to Paris and paid over to her two hundred thousand francs that the old commissariat-contractor had placed in his keeping, with instructions to hold it in trust for his niece. He persuaded the widow to return to Normandy, where she completed her daughter's education, and, by the advice of the old lawyer, purchased back one of the family estates under very favorable conditions."

"Ah!" sighed Godefroid.

"Oh! all this was nothing!" said Monsieur Alain. "We have not yet come to the hurricane. To proceed. In 1807,

after four years of peace, Madame de la Chanterie saw her only daughter married to a gentleman whose piety, whose antecedents, and fortune seemed a guarantee from every point of view; a man who was reported to be the 'pet lamb' of the best society in the country-town where madame and her daughter spent every winter. Remark: this society consisted of seven or eight families belonging to the highest French nobility—the d'Esgrignons, the Troisvilles, the Casterans, the Nouâtres, and the like.

"At the end of eighteen months this man deserted his wife and vanished in Paris, having changed his name. Madame de la Chanterie could never discover the cause of this separation till the lightning flash showed it in the midst of the storm. Her daughter, whom she had brought up with the greatest care and the purest religious feelings, preserved absolute silence on the subject.

"This lack of confidence was a great shock to Madame de la Chanterie. Many times already she had detected in her daughter certain indications of the father's adventurous spirit, strengthened by an almost manly determination of character. The husband had departed without let or hindrance, leaving his affairs in the utmost disorder. To this day Madame de la Chanterie is amazed at this catastrophe, which no human power could remedy. All the persons she privately consulted had assured her before the marriage that the young man's fortune was clear and unembarrassed, in land unencumbered by mortgages, when, at that very time, the estate had, for ten years, been loaded with debt far beyond its value. So everything was sold, and the poor young wife, reduced to her own little income, came back to live with her mother.

"Madame de la Chanterie subsequently learned that this man had been kept going by the most respectable persons in the district for their own benefit, for the wretched man owed them all more or less considerable sums of money. Indeed,

ever since her arrival in the province, Madame de la Chanterie had been regarded as a prey.

"However, there were other reasons for this climax of disaster, which you will understand from a confidential communication addressed to the Emperor.

"This man had long since succeeded in winning the good graces of the leading Royalists of the Department by his devotion to the cause during the stormiest days of the Revolution. As one of Louis XVIII.'s most active emissaries, he had, since 1793, been mixed up in every conspiracy, always withdrawing at the right moment, and with so much dexterity as to give rise at last to suspicions of his honor. The King dismissed him from service, and he was excluded from all further scheming, so he retired to his estate, already deeply involved. All these antecedents, at that time scarcely known —for those who were initiated into the secrets of the Cabinet did not say much about so dangerous a colleague—made him an object almost of worship in a town devoted to the Bourbons, where the cruelest devices of the Chouans were regarded as honest warfare. The Esgrignons, the Casterans, the Chevalier de Valois, in short, the aristocracy and the church, received the Royalist with open arms, and took him to their bosom. This favor was supported by his creditors' earnest desire to be paid.

"This wretch, a match for the deceased la Chanterie, was able to keep up this part for three years; he affected the greatest piety, and subjugated his vices. During the first few months of his married life he had some little influence over his wife; he did his utmost to corrupt her by his doctrines, if atheism may be called a doctrine, and by the flippant tone in which he spoke of the most sacred things.

"This backstairs diplomatist had, on his return to the country, formed an intimacy with a young man, over head and ears in debt like himself, but attractive, in so far that he had as much courage and honesty as the other had shown

hypocrisy and cowardice. This guest at his house—whose charm and character could not fail to impress a young woman, to say nothing of his adventurous career—was a tool in the husband's hands which he used to support his infamous principles. The daughter never confessed to her mother the gulf into which circumstances had thrown her—for human prudence is no word for the caution exercised by Madame de la Chanterie when seeking a husband for her only child. And this last blow, in a life so devoted, so guileless, so religious as hers, tested as she had been by every kind of misfortune, filled Madame de la Chanterie with a distrust of herself which isolated her from her daughter; all the more so because her daughter, in compensation for her ill-fortune, insisted on perfect liberty, overruled her mother, and was sometimes very rough with her.

"Thus wounded in every feeling, cheated alike in her devotion and her love for her husband—to whom she had sacrificed her happiness, her fortune, and her life, without a murmur; cheated in the exclusively religious training she had given her daughter; cheated by the world, even in the matter of that daughter's marriage, and meeting with no justice from the heart in which she had implanted none but right feelings, she turned more resolutely to God, clinging to Him whose hand lay so heavy on her. She was almost a nun; she went to mass every morning, carried out monastic discipline, and saved in everything to be able to help the poor.

"Has any woman ever known a more saintly or more severely tried life than this noble creature, so mild to the unfortunate, so brave in danger, and always so perfect a Christian?" said the worthy man, appealing to Godefroid. "You know madame, you know whether she is deficient in sense, judgment, and reflection. She has all these qualities in the highest degree. Well, and still all these misfortunes, which surely were enough to qualify any life as surpassing all others in adversity, were a trifle compared with what God had yet in store for this woman. We will speak only of Madame

de la Chanterie's daughter," said Monsieur Alain, going on with his narrative.

"At the age of eighteen, when she married, Mademoiselle de la Chanterie had an extremely delicate complexion, rather dark, with a brilliant color, a slender form, and charming features. An elegantly formed brow was crowned by the most beautiful black hair, that matched well with bright and lively hazel eyes. A peculiar prettiness and a childlike countenance belied her real nature and masculine decisiveness. She had small hands and feet; in all her person there was something tiny and frail, which excluded any idea of strength and willfulness. Never having lived away from her mother, her mind was absolutely innocent, and her piety remarkable.

"This young lady, like Madame de la Chanterie, was fanatically devoted to the Bourbons, and hated the Revolution; she regarded Napoleon's empire as a plague inflicted on France by Providence, as a punishment for the crimes of 1793. Such a conformity of opinion between the lady and her son-in-law was, as it always must be in such cases, a conclusive reason in favor of the marriage, in which all the aristocracy of the province took the greatest interest.

"This wretched man's friend had at the time of the rebellion in 1799 been the leader of a troop of Chouans. It would seem that the baron—for Madame de la Chanterie's son-in-law was a baron—had no object in throwing his wife and his friend together but that of extracting money from them. Though deeply in debt, and without any means of living, the young adventurer lived in very good style, and was able, no doubt, to help the promoter of Royalist conspiracies.

"Here you will need a few words of explanation as to an association which made a great noise in its day," said Monsieur Alain, interrupting his narrative. "I mean that of the raiders known as the Chauffeurs. These brigands pervaded all the western provinces more or less; but their object was not so much pillage as a revival of the Royalist opposition.

Advantage was taken of the very general resistance of the people to the law of conscription, which, as you know, was enforced with many abuses. Between Mortagne and Rennes, and even beyond, as far as to the Loire, nocturnal raids were frequent, commonly to the injury of those who held national lands. These bands of destroyers were the terror of the country. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that in some Departments the arm of Justice was practically paralyzed. Those last thunders of civil war did not echo so far as you might suppose, accustomed as we now are to the startling publicity given by the press to the most trivial acts of political and private life. The censor allowed nothing to appear in print that bore on politics, unless it were accomplished fact, and even that was distorted. If you will take the trouble to look through old files of the 'Moniteur' and other newspapers, even those issued in the western provinces, you will find not a word concerning the four or five great trials which brought sixty or eighty of these rebels to the scaffold. 'Brigands,' this was the name given under the Revolution to the Vendéens, the Chouans, and all who took up arms for the house of Bourbon; and it was still given in legal phraseology under the Empire to the Royalists who were victims to sporadic conspiracies. For to some vehement souls the Emperor and his government were 'the Enemy,' and everything seemed good that was adverse to him. I am explaining the position, not justifying the opinions, and I will now go on with my story.

"So now," he said, after a pause, such as will occur in a long story, "you must understand that these Royalists were ruined by the war of 1793, though consumed by frantic passions; and if you can conceive of some exceptional natures consumed also by such necessities as those of Madame de la Chanterie's son-in-law and his friend the Chouan leader, you will see how it was that they determined to commit, for their own private advantage, acts of robbery which their political

opinions would justify, against the Imperial Government for the advantage of the Cause.

"The young leader set to work to fan the ashes of the Chouan faction, to be ready to act at an opportune moment. There was, soon after, a terrible crisis in the Emperor's affairs when he was shut up in the island of Lobau, and it seemed that he must inevitably succumb to a simultaneous attack by England and by Austria. The victory of Wagram made the internal rebellion all but abortive. This attempt to revive the fires of civil war in Brittany, la Vendée, and part of Normandy was unfortunately coincident with the baron's money difficulties; he had flattered himself that he could contrive a separate expedition, of which the profits could be applied solely to redeem his property. But his wife and friend, with noble feeling, refused to divert to private uses any sums that might be snatched at the sword's point from the State coffers; these were to be distributed to the rebel conscripts and Chouans, and to purchase weapons and ammunition to arm a general rising.

"At last, when after heated discussions the young Chouan, supported by the baroness, positively refused to retain a hundred thousand francs in silver crowns which was to be seized from one of the Government receivers' offices in the west to provide for the Royalist forces, the husband disappeared, to escape the execution on his person of several writs that were out against him. The creditors tried to extract payment from his wife, but the wretched man had dried up the spring of affection which prompts a woman to sacrifice herself for her husband.

"All this was kept from poor Madame de la Chanterie, but it was a trifle in comparison with the plot that lay behind this merely preliminary explanation.

"It is too late this evening," said the good man, looking at the clock, "and there is too much still to tell, to allow of my going on with the rest of the story. My old friend Bordin,

who was made famous as a Royalist by his share in the great Simeuse trial, and who pleaded in the case of the Chauffeurs* of Mortagne, gave me when I came here to live two documents which, as he died not long after, I still have in my possession. You will there find the facts set forth much more concisely than I could give them. The details are so complicated that I should lose myself in trying to state them, and it would take me more than two hours, while in these papers you will find them summarized. To-morrow morning I will tell you what remains to be told concerning Madame de la Chanterie, for when you have read these documents you will be sufficiently informed for me to conclude my tale in a few words."

He placed some papers, yellow with years, in Godefroid's hands; after bidding his neighbor good-night, the young man retired to his room, and before he went to sleep read the two documents here reproduced:

"BILL OF INDICTMENT.

"*Court of Criminal and Special Justice for the Department of the Orne.*

"The Public Prosecutor to the Imperial Court of Justice at Caen, appointed to carry out his functions to the Special Criminal Court sitting by the Imperial decree of September, 1809, in the town of Alençon, sets forth to the Court the following facts, as proved by the preliminary proceedings, to wit:

"That a conspiracy of brigands, hatched for a long time with extraordinary secrecy, and connected with a scheme for a general rising in the western departments, has vented itself in several attempts on the lives and property of citizens, and

* Royalists who robbed the mail-coaches conveying government funds, also levying tribute on persons who had bought the confiscated property of *émigrés*.

more especially in the attack with robbery, under arms, on a vehicle conveying, on the — of May, 18—, the Government moneys collected at Caen. This attack, recalling in its details the memories of the civil war now so happily at an end, showed deep-laid designs of a degree of villainy which cannot be excused by the vehemence of passion.

"From its inception to the end, the plot is extremely complicated and the details numerous. The preliminary examinations lasted for more than a year, but the evidence forthcoming at every stage of the crime throws full light on the preparations made, on its execution, and results.

"The first idea of the plot was conceived of by one Charles-Amédée-Louis-Joseph Rifoël, calling himself the Chevalier du Vissard, born at le Vissard, a hamlet of Saint-Mexme by Ernée, and formerly a leader of the rebels.

"This man, who was pardoned by His Majesty the Emperor at the time of the general peace and amnesty, and whose ingratitude to his sovereign has shown itself in fresh crimes, has already suffered the extreme penalty of the law as the punishment for his misdeeds; but it is necessary here to refer to some of his actions, as he had great influence over some of the accused now awaiting the verdict of justice, and he is concerned in every circumstance of the case.

"This dangerous agitator, who bore an alias, as is common with these rebels, and was known as 'Pierrot,' used to wander about the western provinces enlisting partisans for a fresh rebellion; but his safest lurking-place was the Castle of Saint-Savin, the home of a woman named Lechantre and her daughter named Bryond, a house in the hamlet of Saint-Savin and in the district of Mortagne. This spot is famous in the most horrible annals of the rebellion of 1799. It was there that a courier was murdered, and his chaise plundered by a band of brigands under the command of a woman, helped by the notorious Marche-à-Terre. Hence brigandage may be said to be endemic in this neighborhood.

"An intimacy for which we seek no name had existed for more than a year between the woman Bryond and the above-named Rifoël.

"It was close to this spot that, in the month of April, 1808, an interview took place between Rifoël and one Boislaurier, a superior leader, known in the more serious risings in the west by the name of Auguste, and he it was who was the moving spirit of the rising now under the consideration of the Court.

"This obscure point, namely, the connection of these two leaders, is plainly proved by the evidence of numerous witnesses, and also stands as a demonstrated fact by the sentence of death carried out on Rifoël. From the time of that meeting, Boislaurier and Rifoël agreed to act in concert.

"They communicated to each other, and at first to no one else, their atrocious purpose, founded on His Royal and Imperial Majesty's absence, in command, at the time, of his forces in Spain; and then, or soon thereafter, they must have plotted to capture the State moneys in transit, as the base for further operations.

"Some time later, one Dubut of Caen dispatched a messenger to the Castle of Saint-Savin, namely, one Hiley, known as le Laboureur, long known as a robber of the diligences; he was charged with information as to trustworthy accomplices. And it was thus, by Hiley's intervention, that the plot secured the coöperation from the first of one Herbomez, called Général-Hardi, a pardoned rebel of the same stamp as Rifoël, and, like him, a traitor to the amnesty.

"Herbomez and Hiley recruited in the neighboring villages seven banditti, whose names must at once be set forth as follows:

"1. Jean Cibot, called Pille-Miche, one of the boldest brigands of a troop got together by Montauran in the year VII., and one of the actors in the robbery and murder of the Mortagne courier.

"2. François Lisieux, known as Grand-Fils, a rebel-conscript of the department of the Mayenne.

"3. Charles Grenier, or Fleur-de-Genet, a deserter from the 69th half-brigade.

"4. Gabriel Bruce, known as Gros-Jean, one of the fiercest Chouans of Fontaine's division.

"5. Jacques Horeau, called Stuart, ex-lieutenant of that brigade, one of Tinténiac's adherents, and well known by the share he took in the Quiberon expedition.

"6. Marie-Anne Cabot, called Lajeunesse, formerly huntsman to the Sieur Carol of Alençon.

"7. Louis Minard, a rebel conscript.

"These, when enrolled, were quartered in three different hamlets in the houses of Binet, Mélin, and Laravinière, inn or tavernkeepers, all devoted to Rifoël.

"The necessary weapons were at once provided by one Jean-François Léveillé, a notary, and the incorrigible abettor of the brigands, serving as a go-between for them with several leaders in hiding; and, in this town, by one Felix Courceuil, called le Confesseur, formerly surgeon to the rebel army of la Vendée; both these men are natives of Alençon. Eleven muskets were concealed in a house belonging to Bryond in a suburb of Alençon; but this was done without his knowledge, for he was at that time living in the country on his estate between Alençon and Mortagne.

"When Bryond left his wife to go her own way in the fatal road she had set out on, these muskets, cautiously removed from the house, were carried by the woman Bryond in her own carriage to the Castle of Saint-Savin.

"It was then that the Department of the Orne and adjacent districts were dismayed by acts of highway robbery that startled the authorities as much as the inhabitants of those districts which had so long enjoyed quiet; and these raids prove that the atrocious foes of the Government and the Em-

[NOTE.—This is contemporary with "The Chouans."]

pire had been kept informed of the secret coalition of 1809 by means of communications from abroad.

"Léveillé the notary, the woman Bryond, Dubut of Caen, Herbomez of Mayenne, Boislaurier of le Mans, and Rifoël were the ringleaders of the association, which was also joined by those criminals who have been already executed under the sentence passed on them with Rifoël, by those accused under this trial, and by several others who have escaped public vengeance by flight, or by the silence of their accomplices.

"It was Dubut who, as a resident near Caen, gave notice to Léveillé of the dispatch of the money. Dubut made several journeys between Caen and Mortagne, and Léveillé also was often on the roads. It may here be noted that, at the time when the arms were removed, Léveillé, who came to visit Bruce, Grenier, and Cibot at Mélin's house, found them arranging the muskets in an inside shed, and helped them himself in so doing.

"A general meeting was arranged to take place at Mortagne at the Écu de France (Crown of France) inn. All the accused were present in various disguises. It was on this occasion that Léveillé, the woman Bryond, Dubut, Herbomez, Boislaurier, and Hiley, the cleverest of the subordinate conspirators, of whom Cibot is the most daring, secured the coöperation of one Vauthier, called Vieux-Chêne, formerly a servant to the notorious Longuy, and now a stableman at the inn. Vauthier agreed to give the woman Bryond due notice of the passing of the chaise conveying the Government moneys, as it commonly stopped to bait the horses at the inn.

"The opportunity ere long offered for assembling the brigand recruits who had been scattered about in various lodgings with great precaution, sometimes in one village and sometimes in another, under the care of Courceuil and of Léveillé. The assembly was managed by the woman Bryond, who afforded the brigands a new hiding-place in the uninhabited

parts of the Castle of Saint-Savin, at a few miles from Mortagne, where she had lived with her mother since her husband's departure. The brigands established themselves there with Hiley at their head, and spent several days there. The woman Bryond, with her waiting-maid Godard, took care to prepare with her own hands everything needed for lodging and feeding these guests. To this end she had trusses of hay brought in, and went to see the brigands in the shelter she had arranged for them, going to and fro with Léveillé. Provisions were procured under the orders and care of Courceuil, Rifoël and Boislaurier giving him instructions.

"The principal feat was decided on and the men fully armed; the brigands stole out of Saint-Savin every night; pending the transit of the Government chest, they carried out raids in the neighborhood, and the whole country was in terror under their repeated incursions. There can be no doubt that the robberies committed at la Sartinière, at Vonay, and at the château of Saint-Seny were the work of this band; their daring equaled their villainy, and they contrived to terrify their victims so effectually that no tales were told, so that justice could obtain no evidence.

"While levying contributions on all who held possession of the nationalized land, the brigands carefully reconnoitred the woods of Le Chesnay, which they had chosen to be the scene of their crime.

"Not far away is the village of Louvigny, where there is an inn kept by the brothers Chaussard, formerly gamekeepers on the property of Troisville, and this was to be the brigands' final rendezvous. The two brothers knew beforehand the part they were to play; Courceuil and Boislaurier had long before sounded them, and revived their hatred of the government of our august Emperor; and had told them that among the visitors who would drop in on them would be some men of their acquaintance—the formidable Hiley and the not less formidable Cibot.

"In fact, on the 6th the seven highwaymen, under the leadership of Hiley, arrived at the brother Chaussards' tavern and spent two days there. On the 8th the chief led out his men, saying they were going nine miles away, and he desired the hosts to provide food, which was taken to a place where the roads met, a little way from the village. Hiley came home alone at night.

"Two riders—who were probably the woman Bryond and Rifoël, for it is said that she accompanied him in his expeditions, on horseback and dressed as a man—arrived that evening and conversed with Hiley. On the following day Hiley wrote to Léveillé the notary, and one of the Chaussard brothers carried the letter and brought back the answer. Two hours later Bryond and Rifoël came on horseback to speak with Hiley.

"The upshot of all these interviews and coming and going was that a hatchet was indispensable to break open the cases. The notary went back with the woman Bryond to Saint-Savin, where they sought in vain for a hatchet.

"Thereupon he returned to the inn and met Hiley half-way, to whom he was to explain that no hatchet was to be found. Hiley made his way back and ordered supper at the inn for ten persons; he then brought in the seven brigands all armed. Hiley made them pile arms like soldiers. They all sat down and supped in haste, Hiley ordering a quantity of food to be packed for them to take away with them. Then he led the elder Chaussard aside and asked him for a hatchet. The tavernkeeper, much astonished, by his own account, refused to give him one. Courceuil and Boislaurier presently came in, and the three men spent the whole night pacing up and down the room and discussing their plan. Courceuil, nicknamed the Confessor, the most cunning of the band, took possession of a hatchet, and at about two in the morning they all went out by different doors.

"Every minute was now precious; the execution of the crime was fixed for that day. Hiley, Courceuil, and Bois-

laurier placed their men. Hiley with Minard, Cabot, and Bruce, formed an ambush to the right of the wood of Le Chesnay. Boislaurier, Grenier, and Horeau occupied the centre. Courceuil, Herbomez, and Lisieux stood by the ravine under the fringe of the wood. All these positions are indicated on the subjoined plan to scale, drawn by the surveyor to the Government.

"The chaise, meanwhile, had started from Mortagne at about one in the morning, driven by one Rousseau, who was so far inculpated by circumstantial evidence as to make it seem desirable to arrest him. The vehicle, driving slowly, would reach the wood of Le Chesnay by about three. It was guarded by a single gendarme; the men were to breakfast at Donnery. There were three travelers, as it happened, beside the gendarme.

"The driver, who had been walking with them very slowly, on reaching the bridge of Le Chesnay, whipped up the horses to a speed and energy that the others remarked upon, and turned into a cross-road known as the Senzey lane. The chaise was soon lost to sight; the way it had gone was known to the gendarme and his companions only by the sound of the horses' bells; the men had to run to come up with it. Then they heard a shout: 'Stand, you rascals!'—and four shots were fired.

"The gendarme, who was not hit, drew his sword and ran on in the direction he supposed the driver to have taken. He was stopped by four men, who all fired; his eagerness saved him, for he rushed past to desire one of the young travelers to run on and have the alarm bell tolled at Le Chesnay, but two of the brigands taking steady aim, advanced toward him; he was forced to draw back a few steps; and just as he was about to turn the wood, he received a ball in the left armpit, which broke his arm; he fell, and found himself completely disabled.

"The shouting and shots had been heard at Donnery. The

officer in command at this station hurried up with one of his gendarmes; a running fire led them away to the side of the wood farthest from the scene of the robbery. The single gendarme tried to intimidate the brigands by a hue and cry, and to delude them into the belief that a force was at hand.

"'Forward!' he cried. 'First platoon to the right! now we have them! Second platoon to the left!'

"The brigands on their side shouted: 'Draw! This way, comrades! Send up the men as fast as you can!'

"The noise of firing hindered the officer from hearing the cries of the wounded gendarme, and helping in the manœuvre by which the other was keeping the robbers in check; but he could hear a clatter close at hand, arising from splitting the cases open. He advanced toward that side; four armed men took aim at him, and he called out, 'Surrender, villains!'

"They only replied: 'Stand, or you are a dead man!'

"He rushed forward; two muskets were fired, and he was hit, one ball going through his left leg and into his horse's flank. The brave man, bleeding profusely, was forced to retire from the unequal struggle, shouting, but in vain: 'Help —come on—the brigands are at Le Chesnay.'

"The robbers, left masters of the field by superiority of numbers, pillaged the chaise which had been intentionally driven into a ravine. They blindfolded the driver, but this was only a feint. The chests were forced open, and bags of money strewed the ground. The horses were unharnessed and loaded with the coin. Three thousand francs' worth of copper money was scornfully left behind; three hundred thousand francs were carried off on four horses. They made for the village of Menneville adjacent to the town of Saint-Savin.

"The gang and their booty stopped at a solitary house belonging to the Chaussard brothers, inhabited by their uncle, one Bourget, who had been in their confidence from the first. This old man, helped by his wife, received the brigands, warned them to be silent, unloaded the beasts, and then

fetched up some wine. The wife remained on sentry by the castle. The old man led the horses back to the wood and returned them to the driver; then he released the two young men who had been gagged as well as the accommodating driver. After refreshing themselves in great haste, the brigands went on their way. Courceuil, Hiley, and Boislaurier reviewed their party, and, after bestowing on each a trifling recompense, sent off the men, each in a different direction.

"On reaching a spot called le Champ-Landry, these malefactors, obeying the prompting which so often leads such wretches into blunders and miscalculations, threw their muskets away into a field of standing corn. The fact that all three did so at the same time is a crowning proof of their collusion. Then, terrified by the boldness and success of their crime, they separated.

"The robbery having been committed, with the additional features of violence and attempt to murder, the chain of subsidiary events was already in preparation, and other actors were implicated in receiving and disposing of the stolen property. Rifoël, hidden in Paris, whence he pulled all the wires of the plot, sent an order to Léveillé to forward him immediately fifty thousand francs. Courceuil, apt at the management of such felonies, had sent off Hiley to inform Léveillé of their success and of his arrival at Mortagne, where the notary at once joined him.

"Vauthier, to whose fidelity they believed they might trust, undertook to find the Chaussards' uncle; he went to the house, but was told by the old man that he must apply to the nephews, who had given over large sums to the woman Bryond. However he bid Vauthier wait for him on the road, and he there gave him a bag containing twelve hundred francs, which Vauthier took to the woman Lechantre for her daughter.

"By Léveillé's advice Courceuil then went to Bourget, who sent him direct to his nephews. The elder Chaussard led Vauthier to the wood and showed him a tree beneath which

a bag of a thousand francs was found buried. In short, Léveillé, Hiley, and Vauthier went to and fro several times, and each time obtained a small sum, trifling in comparison with the whole amount stolen.

"These moneys were handed over to the woman Lechantre at Mortagne; and, in obedience to a letter by a messenger from her daughter, she carried them to Saint-Savin, whither the said Bryond had returned.

"It is not now necessary to inquire whether this woman Lechantre had any previous knowledge of the plot. For the present it need only be noted that she had left Mortagne to go to Saint-Savin the day before the crime was committed in order to fetch away her daughter; that the two women met half-way, and returned to Mortagne; that, on the following day, the notary, being informed of this by Hiley, went from Alençon to Mortagne, and straight to their house, where he persuaded them to transport the money, obtained with so much difficulty from the Chaussards and from Bourget, to a certain house in Alençon, presently to be mentioned as belonging to one Pannier, a merchant there. The woman Lechantre wrote to the man in charge at Saint-Savin to come to Mortagne and escort her and her daughter by cross-roads to Alençon. The money, amounting to twenty thousand francs in all, in sample-sacks and valises, was packed into a vehicle at night, the girl Godard helping to dispose of it.

"The notary had planned the way they were to travel. They reached an inn kept by one of their allies, a man named Louis Chargegrain, in the hamlet of Littray. But in spite of the notary's precautions—he riding ahead of the chaise—some strangers were present and saw the valises and bags taken out which contained the coin.

"But just as Courceuil and Hiley, disguised as women, were consulting, in the market-square at Alençon, with the aforenamed Pannier—who since 1794 had been the rebel's treasurer, and who was devoted to Rifoël—as to the best means

of transmitting the required sum to Rifoël, the terror occasioned by the arrests and inquiries already made was so great that the woman Lechantre, in her alarm, set off at night from the inn where they were, and fled with her daughter by country byways, leaving Léveillé behind, and took refuge in the hiding-places known to them in Saint-Savin Castle. The same alarm came over the other criminals. Courceuil, Boislaurier, and his relation Dubut exchanged two thousand francs in silver for gold at a dealer's and fled across Brittany to England.

"On arriving at Saint-Savin, the mother and daughter heard that Bourget was arrested with the driver and the runaway conscripts.

"The magistrates, the police, and the authorities acted with so much decision that the gang deemed it necessary to protect the woman Bryond from their investigations, for all these felons were devotedly attached to her, and she had won the affections of them all. So she was removed from Saint-Savin, and hid at first at Alençon, where her adherents held council and succeeded in concealing her in Pannier's cellars.

"Hereupon fresh incidents occurred. After the arrest of Bourget and his wife, the Chaussards refused to give up any more money, saying they had been betrayed. This unexpected defection fell out at the very moment when all the conspirators were in the greatest need of supplies, if only as a means of escape. Rifoël was thirsting for money. Hiley, Cibot, and Léveillé now began to doubt the honesty of the two Chaussards. This led to a fresh complication which seems to demand the intervention of the law.

"Two gendarmes, commissioned to discover the woman Bryond, succeeded in getting into Pannier's house, where they were present at a council held by the criminals; but these men, false to the confidence placed in them, instead of arresting Bryond, were enslaved by her charms. These rascally soldiers—named Ratel and Mallet—showed the woman

every form of interest and devotion, and offered to escort her to the Chaussards' inn and compel them to make restitution. The woman went off on horseback, dressed as a man, and accompanied by Ratel, Mallet, and the maidservant Godard. She set out at night, and on reaching the inn she and one of the Chaussard brothers had a private but animated interview. She had a pistol, and was resolved to blow her accomplice's brains out in case of his refusal; in fact, he led her to the wood, and she brought back a heavy sack. In it she found copper coin and twelve-sou silver-pieces to the value of fifteen hundred francs.

"It was then suggested that as many of the conspirators as could be got together should take the Chaussards by surprise, seize them, and put them to torture. Pannier, on hearing of this disappointment, flew into a rage and broke out in threats; and though the woman Bryond threatened him in return with Rifoël's vengeance, she was compelled to fly.

"All these facts were confessed by Ratel.

"Mallet, touched by her position, offered the woman Bryond a place of shelter; they all set off together and spent the night in the Troisville forest. Then Mallet and Ratel, with Hiley and Cibot, went by night to the Chaussards' tavern, but they found that the brothers had left the place, and that the remainder of the money had certainly been removed.

"This was the last attempt on the part of the conspirators to recover the stolen money.

"It is now important to define more accurately the part played by each of the criminals implicated in this affair.

"Dubut, Boislaurier, Gentil, Herbomez, Courceuil, and Hiley are all leaders, some in council, and some in action. Boislaurier, Dubut, and Courceuil, all three contumacious deserters, are habitual rebels, stirring up troubles, the implacable foes of Napoleon the Great, of his victories, his dynasty, and his government, of our new code of laws and of the Imperial constitution. Herbomez and Hiley, as their right-hand

men, boldly carried out what the three others planned. The guilt of the seven instruments of the crime is beyond question —Cibot, Lisieux, Grenier, Bruce, Horeau, Cabot, and Minard. It is proved by the depositions of those who are now in the hands of justice. Lisieux died during the preliminary inquiry, and Bruce has evaded capture.

"The conduct of the chaise-driver Rousseau marks him as an accomplice. The slow progress on the highroad, the pace to which he flogged the horses on reaching the woods, his persistent statement that his head was muffled, whereas, by the evidence of the young fellow-travelers, the leader of the brigands had the handkerchief removed and ordered him to recognize the men—all contribute to afford presumptive evidence of his collusion.

"As to the woman Bryond and Léveillé the notary, their complicity was constant and continuous from the first. They supplied funds and means for the crime; they knew of it and abetted it. Léveillé was constantly traveling to and fro. The woman Bryond invented plot upon plot; she risked everything —even her life—to secure the money. She lent her house, her carriage, and was concerned in the plot from the beginning, nor did she attempt to persuade the chief leader to desist from it when she might have exerted her evil influence to hinder it. She led the maidservant Godard into its toils. Léveillé was so entirely mixed up in it that it was he who tried to procure the hatchet needed by the robbers.

"The woman Bourget, Vauthier, the Chaussards, Pannier, the woman Lechantre, Mallet, and Ratel were all incriminated in various degrees, as also the innkeepers Mélin, Binet, Laravinière, and Chargegrain.

"Bourget died during the preliminary inquiry, after making a confession which leaves no doubt as to the part taken by Vauthier and the woman Bryond; and though he tried to mitigate the charge against his wife and his nephews the Chaussards, the reasons for his reticence are self-evident.

"But the Chaussards certainly knew that they were supplying provisions to highway robbers; they saw that the men were armed, and were informed of all their scheme; they allowed them to take the hatchet needed for breaking open the chests, knowing the purpose for which it was required. Finally, they received wittingly the money obtained by the robbery, they hid it, and in fact made away with the greater part of it.

"Pannier, formerly treasurer to the rebel party, concealed the woman Bryond; he is one of the most dangerous participators in the plot, of which he was informed from its origin. With regard to him we are in the dark as to some circumstances as yet unknown, but of which justice will take cognizance. He is Rifoël's immediate ally and in all the secrets of the ante-revolutionary party in the West; he greatly regretted the fact that Rifoël should have admitted the women into the plot or have trusted them at all. He forwarded money to Rifoël and received the stolen coin.

"As to the two gendarmes, Ratel and Mallet, their conduct most justly deserves the utmost rigor of the law. They were traitors to their duty. One of them, foreseeing his fate, committed suicide after making some important revelations. The other, Mallet, denied nothing, and his tacit confession removes all doubt.

"The woman Lechantre, in spite of her persistent denials, was informed of everything. The hypocrisy of this woman, who attempts to shelter her professed innocence under the practice of assumed devotion, is known by her antecedents to be prompt and intrepid in extremities. She asserts that she was deceived by her daughter, and believed that the money in question belonged to the man Bryond. The trick is too transparent. If Bryond had had any money, he would not have fled from the neighborhood to avoid witnessing his own ruin. Lechantre considered that there was no harm in the robbery when it was approved of by her ally Boislaurier.

But how, then, does she account for Rifoël's presence at Saint-Savin, her daughter's expeditions and connection with the man, and the visit of the brigands who were waited on by the woman Godard and Bryond? She says she sleeps heavily, and is in the habit of going to bed at seven o'clock, and did not know what answer to make when the examining judge observed that then she must rise at daybreak, and could not have failed to discern the traces of the plot and of the presence of so many men, or to be uneasy about her daughter's nocturnal expeditions. To this she could only say that she was at her prayers.

"The woman is a model hypocrite. In fact, her absence on the day when the crime was committed, the care she took to remove her daughter to Mortagne, her journey with the money, and her precipitate flight when everything was discovered, the care with which she hid herself, and the circumstances of her arrest, all prove her complicity from the inchoation of the plot. Her conduct was not that of a mother anxious to explain the danger to her daughter and to save her from it, but that of a terrified accomplice; and she was an accessory, not out of foolish affection, but from party spirit inspired by hatred, as is well known, for His Imperial Majesty's government. Maternal weakness indeed could not excuse her, and it must not be forgotten that consent, long premeditated, is an evident sign of her complicity.

"Not the crime alone, but its moving spirits, are now known. We see in it the monstrous combination of the delirium of faction with a thirst for rapine; murder prompted by party spirit, under which men take shelter, and justify themselves for the most disgraceful excesses. The orders of the leaders was the signal for the robbery of State moneys to pay for subsequent violence; base and ferocious mercenaries were found to do it for wretched pay, and fully prepared to meet resistance with murder; while the agitators to rebellion, not less guilty, helped in dividing and concealing the booty.

What society can allow such attempts to go unpunished? The law has no adequate punishment.

"The Bench of this Criminal and Special Court, then, will be called upon to decide whether the aforenamed Herbomez, Hiley, Cibot, Grenier, Horeau, Cabot, Minard, Mélin, Binet, Laravinière, Rousseau, the woman Bryond, Léveillé, the woman Bourget, Vauthier, the elder Chaussard, Pannier, the widow Lechantre, and Mallet—all hereinbefore described and in presence of the Court—and the aforenamed Boislaurier, Dubut, Courceuil, Bruce, Chaussard the younger, Chargegrain, and the girl Godard, being absent or having fled, are or are not guilty of the acts described in this bill of indictment.

"Given in the Court at Caen this 1st of December, 180—

"(*Signed*) BARON BOURLAC,

"*Attorney-General.*"

This legal document, much shorter and more peremptory than such bills of indictment are in these days, so full of detail and so complete on every point, especially as to the previous career of the accused, excited Godefroid to the utmost. The bare, dry style of an official pen, setting forth, in red ink, as it were, the principal facts of the case, was enough to set his imagination working. Concise, reserved narrative is to some minds a problem in which they lose themselves in exploring the mysterious depths.

In the dead of night, stimulated by the silence, by the darkness, by the dreadful connection hinted at by Monsieur Alain of this document with Madame de la Chanterie, Godefroid concentrated all his intelligence on the consideration of this terrible affair.

The name of Lechantre was evidently the first name of the la Chanterie family, whose aristocratic titular name had of course been curtailed under the Republic and the Empire.

His fancy painted the scenery where the drama was played, and the figures of the accomplices rose before him. Imagina-

tion showed him, not indeed "the aforenamed Rifoël," but the Chevalier du Vissard, a youth resembling Walter Scott's Fergus—in short, a French edition of the Jacobite. He worked out a romance on the passion of a young girl grossly betrayed by her husband's infamy—a tragedy then very fashionable—and in love with a young leader rebelling against the Emperor; rushing headlong, like Diana Vernon, into the toils of a conspiracy, fired with enthusiasm, and then, having started on the perilous descent, unable to check her wild career. Had it ended on the scaffold?

A whole world seemed to rise before Godefroid. He was wandering through the groves of Normandy; he could see the Breton gentleman and Madame Bryond in the copse; he dwelt in the old Castle of Saint-Savin; he pictured the winning over of so many conspirators—the notary, the merchant, and the bold Chouan leaders. He could understand the almost unanimous adhesion of a district where the memory was still fresh of the famous Marche-à-Terre, of the Comtes de Bauvan and de Longuy, of the massacre at la Vivetière, and of the death of the Marquis de Montauran, of whose exploits he had heard from Madame de la Chanterie.

This vision, as it were, of men and things and places, was but brief. As he realized the fact that this story was that of the noble and pious old lady whose virtues affected him to the point of a complete metamorphosis, Godefroid, with a thrill of awe, took up the second document given to him by Monsieur Alain, which bore the title:

"AN APPEAL ON BEHALF OF MADAME HENRIETTE BRYOND DES TOURS-MINIÈRES, *née* LECHANTRE DE LA CHANTERIE."

"That settles it," thought Godefroid.

The paper ran as follows:

"We are condemned and guilty; but if ever the sovereign

had cause to exercise his prerogative of mercy, would it not be under the circumstances herein set forth?

"The culprit is a young woman, who says she is about to become a mother, and is condemned to death.

"On the threshold of the prison, and in view of the scaffold, this woman will tell the truth. That statement will be in her favor, and to that she looks for pardon.

"The case, tried in the Criminal Court of Alençon, presents some obscure features, as do all cases where several accused persons have combined in a plot inspired by party feeling.

"His Imperial and Kingly Majesty's Privy Council are now fully informed as to the identity of a mysterious personage, known as 'le Marchand,' whose presence in the department of the Orne was not disputed by the public authorities in the course of the trial, though the pleader for the Crown did not think it advisable to produce him in Court, and the defendants had no right to call him, nor, indeed, power to produce him.

"This man, as is well known to the Bench, to the local authorities, to the Paris police, and to the Imperial and Royal Council, is Bernard-Polydor Bryond des Tours-Minières, who, since 1794, has been in correspondence with the Comte de Lille; he is known abroad as the Baron des Tours-Minières, and in the records of the Paris police as Contenson.

"He is a very exceptional man, whose youth and rank were stained by unremitting vice, such utter immorality and such criminal excesses, that so infamous a life would inevitably have ended on the scaffold but for the skill with which he played a double part under shelter of his two names. Still, as he is more and more the slave of his passions and insatiable necessities, he will at last fall below infamy, and find himself in the lowest depths, in spite of indisputable gifts and an extraordinary mind.

"When the Comte de Lille's better judgment led to his

forbidding Bryond to draw money from abroad, the man tried to get out of the blood-stained field on to which his necessities had led him. Was it that this career no longer paid him well enough? Or was it remorse or shame that led the man back to the district where his estates, loaded with debt when he went away, could have but little to yield even to his skill? This it is impossible to believe. It seems more probable that he had some mission to fulfill in those departments where some sparks were still lingering of the civil broils and covert rebellions.

"When wandering through the provinces, where his perfidious adhesion to the schemes of the English and of the Comte de Lille gained him the confidence of certain families still attached to the party that the genius of our immortal Emperor had reduced to silence, he met one of the former leaders of the Rebellion—a man with whom he had had dealings as an envoy from abroad at the time of the Quiberon expedition, during the last rising in the year VII. He encouraged the hopes of this agitator, who has since paid the penalty of his treasonable plots on the scaffold. At that time, then, Bryond was able to learn all the secrets of the incorrigible faction who misprize the glory of His Majesty the Emperor Napoleon I., and the true interests of the country as represented by his sacred person.

"At the age of five-and-thirty, this man, who affected the deepest piety, who professed unbounded devotion to the interests of the Comte de Lille, and perfect adoration for the rebels of the West who perished in the struggle, who skillfully disguised the ravages of a youth of debauchery, and whose personal appearance was in his favor, came, under the protection of his creditors, who told no tales, and of the most extraordinary good-nature on the part of all the *ci-devants* of the district, to be introduced with all these claims on her regard to the woman Lechantre, who was supposed to have a very fine fortune. The scheme in view was to secure a marriage be-

tween Madame Lechantre's only daughter, Henriette, and this protege of the Royalist party.

"Priests, ex-nobles, and creditors, all from different motives, conspired to promote the marriage between Bernard Bryond and Henriette Lechantre.

"The good judgment of the notary who took charge of Madame Lechantre's affairs, and his shrewd suspicions, led perhaps to the poor girl's undoing. For Monsieur Chesnel, a notary at Alençon, settled the lands of Saint-Savin, the bride's sole estate, on her and her children, reserving a small charge on it and the right of residence to the mother for life.

"Bryond's creditors, who, judging from her methodical and economical style of living, had supposed that Madame Lechantre must have saved large sums, were disappointed in their hopes, and, believing that she must be avaricious, they sued Bryond, and this led to a revelation of his impecuniosity and difficulties.

"Then the husband and wife quarreled violently, and the young woman came to full knowledge of the dissipated habits, the atheistical opinions both in religion and in politics, nay, I may say, the utter infamy, of the man to whom fate had irrevocably bound her. Then Bryond, being obliged to let his wife into the secret of the atrocious plots against the Imperial Government, offered an asylum under his roof to Rifoël du Vissard.

"Rifoël's character—adventurous, brave, and lavish—had an extraordinary charm for all who came under his influence; of this there is abundant proof in the cases tried in no less than three special criminal courts.

"The irresistible influence, in fact the absolute power, he acquired over a young woman who found herself at the bottom of a gulf, is only too evident in the catastrophe of which the horror brings her as a suppliant to the foot of the throne. And His Imperial and Kingly Majesty's Council will have no difficulty in verifying the infamous collusion of Bryond, who,

far from doing his duty as the guide and adviser of the girl intrusted to his care by the mother he had deceived, condoned and encouraged the intimacy between his wife Henriette and the rebel leader.

"This was the plan imagined by this detestable man, who makes it his glory that he respects nothing, and that he never considers any end but the gratification of his passions, while he regards every sentiment based on social or religious morality as a mere vulgar prejudice. And it may here be remarked that such scheming is habitual to a man who has been playing a double part ever since 1794, who for eight years has deceived the Comte de Lille and his adherents, probably deceiving at the same time the superior police of the Empire—for such men are always ready to serve the highest bidder.

"Bryond, then, was urging Rifoël to commit a crime; he it was who insisted on an armed attack and highway robbery of the State treasure in transit, and on heavy contributions to be extorted from the purchasers of the national land, by means of atrocious tortures which he invented, and which carried terror into five Departments. He demanded no less than three hundred thousand francs to pay off the mortgages on his property.

"In the event of any objection on the part of Rifoël or Madame Bryond, he intended to revenge himself for the contempt he had inspired in his wife's upright mind by handing them both over to be dealt with by the law as soon as they should commit some capital crime.

"As soon as he perceived that party spirit was a stronger motive than self-interest in these two whom he had thus thrown together, he disappeared; he came to Paris, armed with ample information as to the state of affairs in the western departments.

"The Chaussard brothers and Vauthier were, it is well known, in constant correspondence with Bryond.

"As soon as the robbery on the chests from Caen was ac-

complished, Bryond, assuming the name of le Marchand, opened secret communications with the prefect and the magistrates. What was the consequence? No conspiracy of equal extent, and in which so many persons in such different grades of the social scale were involved, has ever been so immediately divulged to justice as this, of which the first attempt was the robbery of the treasure from Caen. Within six days of the crime, all the guilty parties had been watched and followed with a certainty that betrays perfect knowledge of the persons in question, and of their plans. The arrest, trial, and execution of Rifoël and his companions are a sufficient proof, and mentioned here only to demonstrate our knowledge of this fact, of which the Supreme Council knows every particular.

"If ever a condemned criminal might hope for the clemency of the sovereign, may not Henriette Lechantre?

"Carried away by a passion and by rebellious principles imbibed with her mother's milk, she is, no doubt, unpardonable in the eye of the law; but, in the sight of our most magnanimous Emperor, may not the most shameless betrayal on one hand, and the most vehement enthusiasm on the other, plead her cause?

"The greatest of Generals, the immortal genius who pardoned the Prince of Hatzfeld, and who, like God Himself, can divine the arguments suggested by a blind passion, may, perhaps, vouchsafe to consider the temptations invincible in the young, which may palliate her crime, great as it is.

"Twenty-two heads have already fallen under the sword of justice and the sentence of the three courts. One alone remains—that of a young woman of twenty, not yet of age. Will not the Emperor Napoleon the Great grant her time for repentance? Is not that a tribute to the grace of God?

"For Henriette Lechantre, wife of Bryond des Tours-Minières, BORDIN,

"Retained for the defense, Advocate in the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine."

This terrible tragedy haunted the little sleep Godefroid was able to get. He dreamed of decapitation, as the physician Guillotin perfected it with philanthropic intentions. Through the hot vapors of a nightmare he discerned a beautiful young woman, full of enthusiasm, undergoing the last preparations, drawn in a cart, and mounting the scaffold with a cry of "Long live the King!"

Godefroid was goaded by curiosity. He rose at daybreak, dressed, and paced his room, till at length he posted himself at the window, and mechanically stared at the sky, reconstructing the drama, as a modern romancer might, in several volumes. And always against the murky background of Chouans, of country-folk, of provincial gentlemen, of rebel leaders, police agents, lawyers and spies, he saw the radiant figures of the mother and daughter; of the daughter deceiving her mother, the victim of a wretch, and of her mad passion for one of those daring adventurers who were afterward regarded as heroes—a man who, to Godefroid's imagination, had points of resemblance to Georges Cadoudal and Charette, and the giants of the struggle between the Republic and the Monarchy.

As soon as Godefroid heard old Alain stirring, he went to his room; but, on looking in through the half-opened door, he shut it again, and withdrew. The old man, kneeling on his prie-Dieu, was saying his morning prayers. The sight of that white head bent in an attitude of humble piety recalled Godefroid to a sense of duty, and he prayed, too, with fervency.

"I was expecting you," said the good man when, at the end of a quarter of an hour, Godefroid entered his room. "I anticipated your impatience, and rose earlier than usual."

"Madame Henriette?——" Godefroid began, with evident agitation.

"Was madame's daughter," replied Alain, interrupting him. "Madame's name is Lechantre de la Chanterie. Under the Empire old titles were not recognized, nor the

names added to the patronymic or first surname. Thus the Baronne des Tours-Minières was 'the woman Bryond;' the Marquis d'Esgrignon was called Carol—Citizen Carol, and afterward the Sieur Carol; the Troisvilles were the Sieurs Guibelin."

"But what was the end? Did the Emperor pardon her?"

"No, alas!" said Alain. "The unhappy little woman perished on the scaffold at the age of twenty-one. After reading Bordin's petition, the Emperor spoke to the Supreme Judge much to this effect:

"'Why make an example of a spy? A secret agent ceases to be a man, and ought to have none of a man's feelings; he is but a wheel in the machine. Bryond did his duty. If our instruments of that kind were not what they are—steel bars, intelligent only in behalf of the Government they serve—government would be impossible. The sentences of Special Criminal Courts must be carried out, or my magistrates would lose all confidence in themselves and in me. And, beside, the men who fought for these people are executed, and they were less guilty than their leaders. The women of the western provinces must be taught not to meddle in conspiracies. It is because the victim of the sentence is a woman that the law must take its course. No excuse is available as against the interests of authority.'

"This was the substance of what the Supreme Judge was so obliging as to repeat to Bordin after his interview with the Emperor. To re-establish tranquillity in the west, which was full of refractory conscripts, Napoleon thought it needful to produce a real 'terror.' The Supreme Judge, in fact, advised the lawyer to trouble himself no further about his clients."

"And the lady?" said Godefroid.

"Madame de la Chanterie was condemned to twenty-two years' imprisonment," replied Alain. "She had already been transferred to Bicêtre, near Rouen, to undergo her sentence, and nothing could be thought of till her Henriette was safe;

for after these dreadful scenes, she was so wrapped up in her daughter that, but for Bordin's promise to petition for the mitigation of the sentence of death, it was thought that madame would not have survived her condemnation. So they deceived the poor mother. She saw her daughter after the execution of the men who had been sentenced to death, but did not know that the respite was granted in consequence of a false declaration that her daughter was expecting her confinement."

"Ah, now I understand everything!" cried Godefroid.

"No, my dear boy. There are some things which cannot be guessed. For a long time after that, madame believed that her daughter was alive."

"How is that?"

"When Madame des Tours-Minières heard through Bordin that her appeal was rejected, the brave little woman had enough strength of mind to write a score of letters dated for several months after her execution to make her mother believe that she was still alive, but gradually suffering more and more from an imaginary malady, and it would end in death. These letters were spread over a period of two years. Thus Madame de la Chanterie was prepared for her daughter's death, but for a natural death; she did not hear of her execution till 1814.

"For two years she was kept in the common prison with the most infamous creatures of her sex, wearing the prison dress; then, thanks to the efforts of the Champignelles and the Beauséants, after the second year she was placed in a private cell, where she lived like a cloistered nun."

"And the others?"

"The notary Léveillé, Herbomez, Hiley, Cibot, Grenier, Horeau, Cabot, Minard, and Mallet were condemned to death, and executed the same day; Pannier, with Chaussard and Vauthier, was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude; they were branded and sent to the hulks; but the Emperor pardoned Chaussard and Vauthier. Mélin, Laravinière, and

Binet had five years' imprisonment. The woman Bourget was imprisoned for twenty-two years. Chargegrain and Rousseau were acquitted. Those who had gotten away were all sentenced to death, with the exception of the maidservant Godard, who, as you will have guessed, is none other than our good Manon."

"Manon!" exclaimed Godefroid in amazement.

"Oh, you do not yet know Manon," replied the worthy man. "That devoted soul, condemned to twenty-two years' imprisonment, had given herself up to justice that she might be with Madame de la Chanterie in prison. Our beloved vicar is the priest from Mortagne who gave the last sacrament to Madame des Tours-Minières, who had the fortitude to escort her to the scaffold, and to whom she gave her last farewell kiss. The same brave and exalted priest had attended the Chevalier du Vissard. So our dear Abbé de Vèze learned all the secrets of the conspirators."

"I see now when his hair turned white," said Godefroid.

"Alas!" said Alain. "He received from Amédée du Vissard a miniature of Madame des Tours-Minières, the only likeness of her that exists; and the abbé has been a sacred personage to Madame de la Chanterie ever since the day when she was restored triumphant to social life."

"How was that?" asked Godefroid in surprise.

"Well, on the restoration of Louis XVIII. in 1814, Boislaurier, who was the younger brother of Monsieur de Boisfrelon, was still under the King's orders to organize a rising in the west—first in 1809, and afterward in 1812. Their name is Dubut; the Dubut of Caen was related to them. There were three brothers: Dubut de Boisfranc, president of the court of subsidies; Dubut de Boisfrelon, councilor-at-law; and Dubut-Boislaurier, a captain of dragoons. Their father had given each the name of one of his three several estates to give them a title and status (*savonnette à la vilain* [wash-ball for the base-born] as it was called), for their grandfather was a

linen merchant. Dubut of Caen, who succeeded in escaping, was one of the branch who had stuck to trade; but he hoped, by devoting himself to the Royal cause, to be allowed to succeed to Monsieur de Boisfranc's title. And in fact Louis XVIII. gratified the wish of his faithful adherent, who, in 1815, was made grand provost, and subsequently became a public prosecutor under the name of Boisfranc; he was president of one of the higher courts when he died. The Marquis du Vissard, the unhappy chevalier's elder brother, created peer of France, and loaded with honors by the King, was made lieutenant of the Maison Rouge, and when that was abolished became prefect. Monsieur d'Herbomez had a brother who was made a count and receiver-general. The unfortunate banker Pannier died on the hulks of a broken heart. Boislaurier died childless, a lieutenant-general and governor of one of the royal residences.

"Madame de la Chanterie was presented to his majesty by Monsieur de Champignelles, Monsieur de Beauséant, the Duc de Verneuil, and the keeper of the seals. 'You have suffered much for me, Madame la Baronne,' said the King; 'you have every claim on my favor and gratitude.'

"'Sire,' she replied, 'your majesty has so much to do in comforting the sufferers, that I will not add the burden of an inconsolable sorrow. To live forgotten, to mourn for my daughter, and do some good—that is all I have to live for. If anything could mitigate my grief, it would be the graciousness of my sovereign, and the happiness of seeing that Providence did not suffer so much devoted service to be wasted.'"

"And what did the King do?" asked Godefroid.

"He restored to Madame de la Chanterie two hundred thousand francs in money," said the good man, "for the estate of Saint-Savin had been sold to make good the loss to the treasury. The letters of pardon granted to Madame la Baronne and her woman express the sovereign's regret for all they had endured in his service, while acknowledging that the

zeal of his adherents had carried them too far in action; but the thing that will seem to you most horrible of all is, that throughout his reign Bryond was still the agent of his secret police."

"Oh, what things kings can do!" cried Godefroid. "And is the wretch still living?"

"No. The scoundrel, who at any rate concealed his name, calling himself Contenson, died at the end of 1829, or early in 1830. He fell from a roof into the street when in pursuit of a criminal. Louis XVIII. was of the same mind as Napoleon as regards police agents.

"Madame de la Chanterie, a perfect saint, prays for this monster's soul, and has two masses said for him every year.

"Though her defense was undertaken by one of the famous pleaders of the day, the father of one of our great orators, Madame de la Chanterie, who knew nothing of her daughter's risks till the moment when the money was brought in—and even then only because Boislaurier, who was related to her, told her the facts—could never establish her innocence. The Président du Ronceret, and Blondet, vice-president of the court at Alençon, vainly tried to clear the poor lady; the influence of the notorious Mergi, the councilor to the supreme court under the Empire, who presided over these trials—a man fanatically devoted to the church and throne, who afterward, as public prosecutor, brought many a Bonapartist head under the axe—was so great at this time over his two colleagues that he secured the condemnation of the unhappy Baronne de la Chanterie. Bourlac and Mergi argued the case with incredible virulence. The president always spoke of the Baronne des Tours-Minières as the woman Bryond, and of madame as the woman Lechantre. The names of all the accused were reduced to the barest Republican forms, and curtailed of all titles.

"There were some extraordinary features of the trial, and I cannot recall them all; but I remember one stroke of auda-

city, which may show you what manner of men these Chouans were. The crowd that pressed to hear the trials was beyond anything your fancy can conceive of; it filled the corridors, and the square outside was thronged as if on the market-days. One morning at the opening of the court, before the arrival of the judges, Pille-Miche, the famous Chouan, sprang over the balustrade into the middle of the mob, made play with his elbows, mixed with the crowd, and fled among the terrified spectators, 'butting like a wild boar,' as Bordin told me. The gendarmes and the people rushed to stop him, and he was caught on the steps just as he had reached the market-place. After this daring attempt, they doubled the guard, and a detachment of men-at-arms was posted on the square, for it was feared that there might be among the crowd some Chouans ready to aid and abet the accused. Three persons were crushed to death in the crowd in consequence of this attempt.

"It was subsequently discovered that Contenson—for, like my old friend Bordin, I cannot bring myself to call him Baron des Tours-Minières, or Bryond, which is a respectable old name—that wretch, it was discovered, had made away with sixty thousand francs of the stolen treasure. He gave ten thousand to the younger Chaussard, whom he enticed into the police and inoculated with all his low tastes and vices; but all his accomplices were unlucky. The Chaussard who escaped was pitched into the sea by Monsieur de Bois-laurier, who understood from something said by Pannier that Chaussard had turned traitor. Contenson indeed had advised him to join the fugitives in order to spy upon them. Vauthier was killed in Paris, no doubt by one of the Chevalier du Vissard's obscure but devoted followers. The younger Chaussard, too, was finally murdered in one of the nocturnal raids conducted by the police; it seems probable that Contenson took this means of ridding himself of his demands or of his remorse by 'sending him to sermon,' as the saying goes.

"Madame de la Chanterie invested her money in the Funds, and purchased this house by the particular desire of her uncle, the old Councilor de Boisfrelon, who in fact gave her the money to buy it. This quiet neighborhood lies close to the archbishop's residence, where our beloved abbé has an appointment under the cardinal. And this was madame's chief reason for acceding to the old lawyer's wish when his income, after twenty-five years of revolutions, was reduced to six thousand francs a year. Beside, madame wished to close a life of such terrible misfortunes as had overwhelmed her for six-and-twenty years in almost cloistered seclusion.

"You may now understand the dignity, the majesty, of this long-suffering woman—august, indeed, as I may say——"

"Yes," said Godefroid, "the stamp of all she has endured has given her an indefinable air of grandeur and majesty."

"Each blow, each fresh pang has but increased her patience and resignation," Alain went on. "And if you could know her as we do, if you knew how keen her feelings are, and how active is the spring of tenderness that wells up in her heart, you would be afraid to take count of the tears she must shed, and her fervent prayers that ascend to God. Only those who, like her, have known but a brief season of happiness can resist such shocks. Hers is a tender heart, a gentle soul clothed in a frame of steel, tempered by privation, toil, and austerity."

"Such a life as hers explains the life of hermits," said Godefroid.

"There are days when I wonder what can be the meaning of such an existence. Is it that God reserves these utmost, bitterest trials for those of His creatures who shall sit on His right hand on the day after their death?" said the good old man, quite unaware that he was artlessly expressing Swedenborg's doctrine concerning the angels.

"What!" exclaimed Godefroid, "Madame de la Chanterie was mixed up with——"

"Madame was sublime in prison," Alain said. "In the course of three years the story of the Vicar of Wakefield came true, for she reclaimed several women of profligate lives. And in the course of her imprisonment, as she took note of the conduct of those confined with her, she learned to feel that great pity for the misery of the people which weighs on her soul, and has made her the queen of Parisian charity. It was in the horrible Bicêtre of Rouen that she conceived of the plan which we devote ourselves to carry out. It was, as she declared, a dream of rapture, an angelic inspiration in the midst of hell; she had no thought of ever seeing it realized.

"But here, in 1819, when peace seemed to be descending on Paris, she came back to her dream. Madame la Duchesse d'Angoulême—the dauphiness, the Duchesse de Berri, the archbishop, and then the chancellor and some pious persons contributed very liberally to the first necessary expenses. The fund was increased by what we could spare from our income, for each of us spends no more than is absolutely necessary."

Tears rose to Godefroid's eyes.

"We are the faithful priesthood of a Christian idea, and belong, body and soul, to this work, of which Madame de la Chanterie is the founder and the soul—that lady whom you hear us respectfully designate as Madame."

"Ah, and I too am wholly yours!" cried Godefroid, holding out his hands to the worthy man.

"Now, do you understand that there are subjects of conversation absolutely prohibited here, never even to be alluded to?" Alain went on. "Do you appreciate the obligation of reticence under which we all feel ourselves to a lady whom we reverence as a saint? Do you understand the charm exerted by a woman made sacred by her misfortunes, having learned so many things, knowing the innermost secret of every form of suffering—a woman who has derived a lesson from every grief, whose every virtue has the twofold sanction of the hardest tests and of constant practice, whose soul is spotless

and above reproach; who has known motherhood only through its sorrows, and conjugal affection only through its bitterness; on whom life never smiled but for a few months—for whom heaven no doubt keeps a palm in store as the reward of resignation and gentleness amid such sorrows? Is she not superior to Job in that she has never murmured?

"So you need never again be surprised to find her speech so impressive, her old age so fresh, her spirit so full of communion, her looks so persuasive; she has had powers extraordinary bestowed on her as a confidante of the sorrowing, for she has known every sorrow. In her presence smaller griefs are mute."

"She is the living embodiment of charity," cried Godefroid with enthusiasm. "May I become one of you?"

"You must endure the tests, and, above all else, BELIEVE!" said the old man with gentle excitement. "So long as you have not hold on faith, so long as you have not assimilated in your heart and brain the divine meaning of Saint Paul's epistle on Charity, you can take no part in our work."

PARIS, 1843–1845.

SECOND EPISODE.

INITIATED.

What is nobly good is contagious, as evil is. And by the time Madame de la Chanterie's boarder had dwelt for some months in this silent old house, after the story told him by Monsieur Alain, which filled him with the deepest respect for the half-monastic life he saw around him, he became conscious of the ease of mind that comes of a regular life, of quiet habits and harmonious tempers in those with whom we live. In four months Godefroid, never hearing an angry tone or the least dispute, owned to himself that since he had come to years of discretion he did not remember ever being so completely at peace—for he could not say happy. He looked on the world from afar, and judged it sanely. At last the desire he had cherished these three months past to take his part in the deeds of this mysterious association had become a passion; and without being a very profound philosopher, the reader may imagine what strength such a passion may assume in seclusion.

So one day—a day marked as solemn by the ascendency of the Spirit—Godefroid, after sounding his heart and measuring his powers, went up to his good friend Alain—whom Madame de la Chanterie always called her lamb—for of all the dwellers under that roof he had always seemed to Godefroid the most accessible and the least formidable. To him, then, he would apply, to obtain from the worthy man some information as to the sort of priesthood which these Brethren in God exercised in Paris. Many allusions to a period of probation suggested to him that he would be put to initiatory tests of some kind. His curiosity had not been fully satisfied by what the venerable old man had told him of the reasons why he had joined

Madame de la Chanterie's association; he wanted to know more about this.

At half-past ten o'clock that evening Godefroid found himself for the third time in Monsieur Alain's rooms, just as the old man was preparing to read his chapter of The Imitation. This time the mild old man could not help smiling, and he said to the young man, before allowing him to speak:

"Why do you apply to me, my dear boy, instead of addressing yourself to madame? I am the most ignorant, the least spiritual, the most imperfect member of the household. For the last three days madame and my friends have seen into your heart," he added, with a little knowing air.

"And what have they seen?" asked Godefroid.

"Oh," said the good man, with perfect simplicity, "they have seen a guileless desire to belong to our community. But the feeling is not yet a very ardent vocation. Nay," he replied to an impulsive gesture of Godefroid's, "you have more curiosity than fervor. In fact, you have not so completely freed yourself from your old ideas but that you imagine something adventurous, something romantic, as the phrase goes, in the incidents of our life——"

Godefroid could not help turning red.

"You fancy that there is some resemblance between our occupations and those of the Khalifs in the 'Arabian Nights,' and you anticipate a kind of satisfaction in playing the part of the good genii in the idyllic beneficences of which you dream! Ah, ha! my son, your smile of confusion shows me that we were not mistaken. How could you expect to conceal your thoughts from us, who make it our business to detect the hidden impulses of the soul, the cunning of poverty, the calculations of the needy; who are honest spies, the police of a merciful Providence, old judges whose code of law knows only absolution, and physicians of every malady whose only prescription is a wise use of money? Still, my dear boy, we do not quarrel with the motives that bring us a

neophyte if only he stays with us and becomes a brother of our Order. We shall judge you by your works. There are two kinds of curiosity—one for good and one for evil. At this moment your curiosity is for good. If you are to become a laborer in our vineyard, the juice of the grapes will give you perpetual thirst for the divine fruit. The initiation looks easy, but is difficult, as in every natural science. In well-doing, as in poetry, nothing can be easier than to clutch at its semblance; but here, as on Parnassus, we are satisfied with nothing short of perfection. To become one of us, you must attain to great knowledge of life—and of such life. Good God! Of that Paris life which defies the scrutiny of the chief of the police and his men. It is our task to unmask the permanent conspiracy of evil, and detect it under forms so endlessly changing that they might be thought infinite. In Paris, Charity must be as omniscient as Sin, just as the police agent must be as cunning as the thief. We have to be at once frank and suspicious; our judgment must be as certain and as swift as our eye.

"As you see, dear boy, we are all old and worn out; but then we are so well satisfied with the results we have achieved that we wish not to die without leaving successors, and we hold you all the more dear because you may, if you will, be our first disciple. For us there is no risk, we owe you to God! Yours is a sweet nature turned sour, and since you came to live here the evil leaven is weaker. Madame's heavenly nature has had its effect on you.

"We held council yesterday; and inasmuch as you have given me your confidence, my good brothers decided on making me your instructor and guide. Are you satisfied with this arrangement?"

"Oh, my kind Monsieur Alain, your eloquence has aroused, awakened——"

"It is not I that speak well, my dear boy, it is that great deeds are eloquent. We are always sure of soaring high if

we obey God and imitate Jesus Christ so far as lies in man aided by faith."

"This moment has decided my fate; I feel the ardor of the neophyte!" cried Godefroid. "I, too, would fain spend my life in well-doing——"

"That is the secret of dwelling in God," replied the good man. "Have you meditated on our motto: *Transire benefaciendo. Transire* means to pass beyond this life, leaving a long train of good actions behind you."

"I have understood it so and I have written up the motto of the Order in front of my bed."

"That is well. And that action, so trivial in itself, is of great value in my eyes. Well, my son, I have your first task ready for you, I will see you with your foot in the stirrup. We must part. Yes, for I have to leave our retreat and take my place in the heart of a volcano. I am going as foreman in a large factory where all the workmen are infected with communistic doctrines—and dream of social destruction, of murdering the masters, never seeing that this would be to murder industry, manufacture, and commerce.

"I shall remain there—who knows—a year, perhaps, as cashier, keeping the books, and making my way into a hundred or more humble homes, among men who were misled by poverty, no doubt, before they were deluded by bad books. However, we shall see each other here every Sunday and holiday; as I shall live in the same quarter of the town we may meet at the church of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas; I shall attend mass there every morning at half-past seven. If you should happen to meet me elsewhere, you must never recognize me, unless I rub my hands with an air of satisfaction. That is one of our signals. Like the deaf-mutes, we have a language by signs, of which the necessity will soon be more than abundantly evident to you."

Godefroid's expression was intelligible to Monsieur Alain, for he smiled and went on—

"Now for your business. We do not practice either beneficence or philanthropy as they are known to you, under a variety of branches which are preyed upon by swindlers, just like any other form of trade. We exercise charity as it is defined by our great and sublime master Saint Paul; for it is our belief, my son, that such charity alone can heal the woes of Paris. Thus, in our eyes, sorrow, poverty, suffering, trouble, evil—from whatever cause they may proceed and in whatever class of society we find them—have equal claims upon us. Whatever their creed or their opinions, the unfortunate are, first and foremost, unfortunate; we do not try to persuade them to look to our holy mother the church until we have rescued them from despair and starvation. And even then we try to convert them by example and kindness, for thus we believe that we have the help of God. All coercion is wrong.

"Of all the wretchedness in Paris, the most difficult to discover and the bitterest to endure is that of the respectable middle-class, the better class of citizens, when they come to poverty, for they make it a point of honor to conceal it. Such disasters as these, my dear Godefroid, are the object of our particular care. Such persons, when we help them, show intelligence and good feeling; they return us with interest what we may lend to them; and in the course of time their repayments cover the losses we meet with through the disabled, or by swindlers, or those whom misfortune has stultified. Sometimes we get useful information from those we have helped; but the work has grown to such vast dimensions, and its details are so numerous, that it is beyond our powers. Now, for the last seven or eight months, we have a physician in our employment in each district of the city of Paris. Each of us has four arrondissements (or wards) under his eye; and we are prepared to pay to each three thousand francs a year to take charge of our poor. He is required to give up his time and care to them by preference, but we do not prevent his taking other patients. Would you believe that we have not

in eight months been able to find twelve such men, twelve good men, in spite of the pecuniary aid offered by our friends and acquaintance? You see, we needed men of absolute secrecy, of pure life, of recognized abilities, and with a love of doing good. Well, in Paris there are perhaps ten thousand men fit for the work, and yet in a year's search the twelve elect have not been found."

"Our Lord found it hard to collect His apostles," said Godefroid, "and there were a traitor and a disbeliever among them after all!"

"At last, within the past fifteen days, each arrondissement has been provided with a Visitor," said the old man, smiling —"for so we call our physicians—and, indeed, within those fifteen days there has been a vast increase of business. However, we have worked all the harder. I tell you this secret of our infant fraternity because you must make acquaintance with the physician of your district, all the more so because we depend on him for information. The gentleman's name is Berton—Doctor Berton—and he lives in the Rue de l'Enfer.

"Now for the facts. Doctor Berton is attending a lady whose disease seems in some way to defy science. That indeed does not concern us, but the Faculty only; our business is to find out the poverty of the sick woman's family, which the doctor believes to be frightful, and concealed with a determination and pride that baffle all our inquiries. Hitherto, my dear boy, this would have been my task; but now the work to which I am devoting myself makes an assistant necessary in my four districts, and you must be that assistant. The family lives in the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, in a house looking out over the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse. You will easily find a room to let there, and while lodging there for a time you must try to discover the truth. Be sordid as regards your own expenses, but do not trouble your head about the money you give. I will send you such sums as we consider necessary, taking all the circumstances of the case into con-

sideration. But study the moral character of these unfortunate people. A good heart and noble feelings are the security for our loans. Stingy to ourselves and generous to suffering, we must still be careful and never rash, for we dip into the treasury of the poor. Go to-morrow, and remember how much power lies in your hands. The Brethren will be on your side."

"Ah!" cried Godefroid, "you have given me so much pleasure in trusting me to do good and be worthy of some day being one of you, that I shall not sleep for joy."

"Stay, my boy, one last piece of advice. The prohibition to recognize me unless I make the sign concerns the other gentlemen and madame, and even the servants of the house. Absolute incognito is indispensable to all our undertakings, and we are so constantly obliged to preserve it that we have made it a law without exceptions. We must be unknown, lost in Paris.

"Remember, too, my dear Godefroid, the very spirit of our Order, which requires us never to appear as benefactors, but to play the obscure part of intermediaries. We always represent ourselves as the agents of some saintly and beneficent personage—are we not toiling for God?—so that no gratitude may be considered due to ourselves, and that we may not be supposed to be rich. True, sincere humility, not the false humility of those who keep in the shade that others may throw a light on them, must inspire and govern all your thoughts. You may rejoice when you succeed; but so long as you feel the least impulse of vanity, you will be unworthy to join the Brotherhood. We have known two perfect men. One, who was one of our founders, Judge Popinot; the other, who was known by his works, was a country doctor who has left his name written in a remote parish. He, my dear Godefroid, was one of the greatest men of our day; he raised a whole district from a savage state to one of prosperity, from irreligion to the Catholic faith, from barbarism to civilization.

The names of those two men are graven on our hearts, and we regard them as our examples. We should be happy indeed if we might one day have in Paris such influence as that country doctor had in his own district.

"But here the plague-spot is immeasurable, and, so far, quite beyond our powers. May God long preserve madame, and send us many such helpers as you, and then perhaps we may found an institution that will lead men to bless His holy religion.

"Well, farewell. Your initiation now begins.

"Bless me! I chatter like a professor, and was forgetting the most important matter. Here is the address of the family I spoke of," he went on, handing a scrap of paper to Godefroid. "And I have added the number of Monsieur Berton's house in the Rue de l'Enfer. Now, go and pray God to help you."

Godefroid took the good old man's hands and pressed them affectionately, bidding him good-night, and promising to forget none of his injunctions.

"All you have said," he added, "is stamped on my memory for life."

Alain smiled with no expression of doubt, and rose to go and kneel at his prie-Dieu. Godefroid went back to his own room, happy in being at last allowed to know the mysteries of this household, and to have an occupation which, in his present frame of mind, was really a pleasure.

At breakfast next morning there was no Monsieur Alain, but Godefroid made no remark on his absence. Nor was he questioned as to the mission given him by the old man; thus he received his first lesson in secrecy. After breakfast, however, he took Madame de la Chanterie aside, and told her that he should be absent for a few days.

"Very well, my child," replied Madame de la Chanterie. "And try to do your sponsor credit, for Monsieur Alain has answered for you to his brethren."

Godefroid took leave of the other three men, who embraced him affectionately, seeming thus to give him their blessing on his outset in his laborious career.

Association—one of the greatest social forces which was the making of Europe in the Middle Ages—is based on feelings which have ceased since 1792, to exist in France, where the individul is now supreme over the State. Association requires, in the first place, a kind of devotedness which is not understood in this country; a simplicity of faith which is contrary to the national spirit; and, finally, a discipline against which everything rebels, and which nothing but the Catholic faith can exact. As soon as an association is formed in France, each member of it, on returning home from a meeting where the finest sentiments have been expressed, makes a bed for himself of the collective devotion of this combination of forces, and tries to milk for his own benefit the cow belonging to all, till the poor thing, inadequate to meet so many individual demands, dies of attenuation.

None can tell how many generous emotions have been nipped, how many fervid germs have perished, how much resource has been crushed and lost to the country by the shameful frauds of the French secret societies, of the patriotic fund for the Champ d'Asile (emigration to America), and other political swindles, which ought to have produced great and noble dramas, but turned out mere farces of the lower police courts.

It was the same with industrial as with political associations. Self-interest took the place of public spirit. The corporations and Hanseatic guilds of the Middle Ages, to which we shall some day return, are as yet out of the question; the only societies that still exist are religious institutions, and at this moment they are being very roughly attacked, for the natural tendency of the sick is to rebel against the remedies and often to rend the physician. France knows not what self-denial means. Hence no association can hold together but by the

aid of religious sentiment, the only power that can quell the rebellion of the intellect, the calculations of ambition, and greed of every kind. Those who are in search of worlds fail to understand that ASSOCIATION has worlds in its gift.

Godefroid, as he made his way through the streets, felt himself a different man. Any one who could have read his mind would have wondered at the curious phenomenon of the communication of the spirit of union. He was no longer one man, but a being multiplied tenfold, feeling himself the representative of five persons whose united powers were at the back of all he did, and who walked with him on his way. With this strength in his heart, he was conscious of a fullness of life, a lofty power that uplifted him. It was, as he afterward owned, one of the happiest moments of his life, for he rejoiced in a new sense—that of an omnipotence more absolute than that of despots. Moral force, like thought, knows no limits.

"This is living for others," said he to himself, "acting with others as if we were but one man, and acting alone as if we were all together! This is having Charity for a leader, the fairest and most living of all the ideals that have been created of the Catholic virtues. Yes, this is living! Come, I must subdue this childish exaltation which Father Alain would laugh to scorn. Still, is it not strange that it is by dint of trying to annul my Self that I have found the power so long wished for? The world of misfortune is to be my inheritance."

He crossed the precincts of Notre-Dame to the Avenue de l'Observatoire in such high spirits that he did not heed the length of the walk.

Having reached the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, at the end of the Rue de l'Ouest, he was surprised to find such pools of mud in so handsome a quarter of the town, for neither of those streets was as yet paved. The foot-passenger had to walk on planks laid close to the walls of the marshy gardens,

or creep by the houses on narrow side-paths, which were soon swamped by the stagnant waters that turned them into gutters.

After much seeking, he discovered the house described to him and got to it, not without some difficulty. It was evidently an old manufactory which had been abandoned. The building was narrow, and the front was a long wall pierced with windows quite devoid of any ornament; but there were none of these square openings on the first floor—only a wretched back-door.

Godefroid supposed that the owner had contrived a number of rooms in this structure to his own profit, for over the door there was a board scrawled by hand to this effect: SEVERAL ROOMS TO LET. Godefroid rang, but no one came; and, as he stood waiting, a passer-by pointed out to him that there was another entrance to the house from the boulevard, where he would find somebody to speak to.

Godefroid acted on the information, and from the boulevard he saw the front of the house screened by the trees of a small garden-plot. This garden, very ill-kept, sloped to the house, for there is such a difference of level between the boulevard and the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs as to make the garden a sort of ditch. Godefroid went down the path, and at the bottom of it saw an old woman whose dilapidated garb was in perfect harmony with the dwelling.

"Was it you who rang in the Rue Notre-Dame?" she asked.

"Yes, madame. Is it your business to show the rooms?"

On a reply in the affirmative from this portress, whose age it was difficult to determine, Godefroid inquired whether the house was tenanted by quiet folk; his occupations required peace and silence; he was a bachelor, and wished to arrange with the doorkeeper to cook and clean for him.

On this hint the woman became gracious, and said—

"Monsieur could not have done better than to hit on this

house; for, excepting the days when there are doings at the Chaumière, the boulevard is as deserted as the Pontine Marshes——"

"Do you know the Pontine Marshes?" asked Godefroid.

"No, sir; but there is an old gentleman upstairs whose daughter is always in a dying state, and he says so. I only repeat it. That poor old man will be truly glad to think that you want peace and quiet, for a lodger who stormed around would be the death of his daughter. And we have two writers of some kind on the third floor, but they come in for the day at midnight, and then for night they go out at eight in the morning. Authors, they say they are, but I do not know where or when they work."

As she spoke, the portress led Godefroid up one of those horrible stairs built of wood and brick, in such an unholy alliance that it is impossible to say whether the wood is parting from the bricks or the bricks are disgusted at being set in the wood; while both materials seem to fortify their disunion by masses of dust in summer and of mud in winter. The walls, of cracked plaster, bore more inscriptions than the Academy of Belles-lettres ever invented.

The woman stopped on the second floor.

"Now, here, sir, are two very good rooms, opening into each other, and on to Monsieur Bernard's landing. He is the old gentleman I mentioned—and quite the gentleman. He has the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, but he has had great troubles, it would seem, for he never wears it. When first they came they had a servant to wait on them, a man from the country, and they sent him away close on three years ago. The lady's young gentleman—her son—does everything now; he manages it all——"

Godefroid looked shocked.

"Oh!" said the woman, "don't be uneasy, they will say nothing to you; they never speak to anybody. The gentleman has been here ever since the Revolution of July; he came

in 1831. They are some high provincial family, I believe, ruined by the change of government; and proud! and as mute as fishes. For four years, sir, they have never let me do the least thing for them, for fear of having to pay. A five-franc piece on New Year's Day, that's every sou I get out of them. Give me your authors! I get ten francs a month, only to tell everybody who comes to ask for them that they left at the end of last quarter."

All this babble led Godefroid to hope for an ally in this woman, who explained to him, as she praised the airiness of the two rooms and adjoining dressing-closets, that she was not the portress, but the landlord's deputy and janitress, managing everything for him to a great extent.

"And you may trust me, monsieur, I promise you! Madame Vauthier—that's me—would rather have nothing at all than take a sou of anybody else's."

Madame Vauthier soon came to terms with Godefroid, who wished to take the rooms by the month and ready furnished. These wretched lodgings, rented by students or authors "down on their luck," were let furnished or unfurnished, as might be required. The spacious lofts over the whole house were full of furniture. But Monsieur Bernard himself had furnished the rooms he occupied.

By getting Madame Vauthier to talk, Godefroid discovered that her ambition was to set up a middle-class boarding-house; but in the course of five years she had failed to meet with a single boarder among her lodgers. She inhabited the first floor, on the side toward the boulevard; thus she was herself the doorkeeper, with the help of a big dog, a sturdy girl, and a boy who cleaned the boots, ran errands, and did the rooms, two creatures as poor as herself, in harmony with the squalor of the house and its inhabitants, and the desolate, neglected appearance of the garden in front.

They were both foundlings, to whom the widow Vauthier gave no wages but their food—and such food! The boy, of

whom Godefroid caught a glimpse, wore a ragged blouse, list slippers instead of shoes, and sabots (wooden shoes) to go out in. With a shock of hair, as tousled as a sparrow taking a bath, and blackened hands, as soon as he had done the work of the house, he went off to measure wood-logs in a woodyard hard by, and when his day was over—at half-past four for wood-sawyers—he returned to his occupations. He fetched water for the household from the fountain by the Observatory and the widow supplied it to the lodgers, as well as the faggots which he chopped and tied.

Népomucène—this was the name of the widow Vauthier's slave—handed over his earnings to his mistress. In summer-time the unhappy waif served as waiter in the wine saloons by the barrière on Sundays and Mondays. Then the woman lent him decent clothes to wear.

As for the girl, she cooked under the widow's orders, and helped her in her trade work at other times, for the woman plied a trade; she made list slippers for hawkers to sell.

All these details were known to Godefroid within an hour, for Madame Vauthier took him all over the house, showing him how it had been altered. A silkworm establishment had been carried on there till 1828, not so much for the production of silk as for that of the eggs—the seed, as it is called. Eleven acres of mulberry-trees at Mont-Rouge and three acres in the Rue de l'Ouest, since built over, had supplied food for this nursery for silkworms' eggs.

Madame Vauthier was telling Godefroid that Monsieur Barbet, who had lent the capital to an Italian named Fresconi to carry on this business, had been obliged to sell those three acres to recover the money secured by a mortgage on the land and buildings, and was pointing out the plot of ground, lying on the other side of the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, when a tall and meagre old man, with perfectly white hair, came in sight at the end of the street where it crosses the Rue de l'Ouest.

"In the very nick of time!" cried Madame Vauthier. "Look, that is your neighbor, Monsieur Bernard. Monsieur Bernard," cried she, as soon as the old man was within hearing, "you will not be alone now; this gentleman here has just taken the rooms opposite yours——"

Monsieur Bernard looked up at Godefroid with an apprehensive eye that was easy to read; it was as though he had said, "Then the misfortune I have so long feared has come upon me!"

"What, monsieur," said he, "you propose to reside here?"

"Yes, monsieur," said Godefroid civilly. "This is no home for those who are lucky in the world, and it is the cheapest lodging I have seen in this part of the town. Madame Vauthier does not expect to harbor millionaires. Good-day, then, Madame Vauthier; arrange things so that I may come in at six o'clock this evening. I shall return punctually."

And Godefroid went off toward the Rue de l'Ouest, walking slowly, for the anxiety he had read in the old man's face led him to suppose that he wanted to dispute the matter with him. And, in fact, after some little hesitation, Monsieur Bernard turned on his heel and walked quickly enough to come up with Godefroid.

"That old wretch! he wants to hinder him from coming back," said Madame Vauthier to herself. "Twice already he has played me that trick. Patience! His rent is due in five days, and if he does not pay it down on the nail, out he goes! Monsieur Barbet is a tiger of a sort that does not need much lashing, and—I should like to know what he is saying to him—Félicité! Félicité! you lazy hussy, will you make haste?" cried the widow in a formidable croak, for she had assumed an affable piping tone in speaking to Godefroid.

The girl, a sturdy, red-haired lass, came running out.

"Just keep a sharp eye on everything for a few seconds, do you hear? I shall be back in five minutes."

And the widow Vauthier, formerly cook to the bookseller's

J. Ayton Symington sc.

"I BEG YOUR PARDON A THOUSAND TIMES, MONSIEUR."

store kept by Barbet, one of the hardest money-lenders on short terms in the neighborhood, stole out at the heels of her two lodgers, so as to watch them from a distance and rejoin Godefroid as soon as he and Monsieur Bernard should part company.

Monsieur Bernard was walking slowly, like a man in two minds, or a debtor seeking for excuses to give to a creditor who has left him to take proceedings.

Godefroid, in front of this unknown neighbor, turned round to look at him under pretense of looking about. And it was not till they had reached the broad walk in the Luxembourg Gardens that Monsieur Bernard came up with Godefroid and addressed him.

"I beg your pardon a thousand times, monsieur," said he, bowing to Godefroid, who returned the bow, "for stopping you, when I have not the honor of knowing you; but is it your firm intention to live in the horrible house where I am lodging?"

"Indeed, monsieur——"

"I know," said the old man, interrupting Godefroid with a commanding air, "that you have a right to ask me what concern of mine it is to meddle in your affairs, to question you. Listen, monsieur; you are young, and I am very old; I am older than my years, and they are sixty-six—I might be taken for eighty! Age and misfortune justify many things, since the law exempts septuagenarians from various public duties; still, I do not dwell on the privileges bestowed by white hairs; it is you for whom I am concerned. Do you know that the part of the town in which you think of living is a desert by eight in the evening, and full of dangers, of which being robbed is the least? Have you noticed the wide plots where there are no houses, the waste ground and market gardens? You will, perhaps, retort that I live there; but I, monsieur, am never out of doors after six in the evening. Or

you will say that two young men are lodgers on the third floor, above the rooms you propose to take; but, monsieur, those two unhappy writers are the victims of writs out against them; they are pursued by their creditors; they are in hiding, and go out all day to come in at midnight; and as they always keep together and carry arms, they have no fear of being robbed. I myself obtained permission from the chief of the police for them each to carry a weapon."

"Indeed, monsieur," said Godefroid, "I have no fear of robbers, for the same reasons as leave these gentlemen invulnerable, and so great a contempt for life, that if I should be murdered by mistake, I should bless the assassin."

"And yet you do not look so very wretched," said the old man, who was studying Godefroid.

"I have barely enough to live on, to give me bread, and I chose that part of the town for the sake of the quiet that reigns there. But may I ask, monsieur, what object you can have in keeping me out of the house?"

The old man hesitated; he saw Madame Vauthier in pursuit. Godefroid, who was examining him attentively, was surprised at the excessive emaciation to which grief, and perhaps hunger, or perhaps hard work, had reduced him; there were traces of all these causes of weakness on the face where the withered skin looked dried on to the bones, as if it had been exposed to the African sun. The forehead, which was high and threatening, rose in a dome above a pair of steel-blue eyes, cold, hard, shrewd, and piercing as those of a savage, and set in deep, dark, and very wrinkled circles, like a bruise round each. A large, long, thin nose, and the upward curve of the chin, gave the old man a marked likeness to the familiar features of Don Quixote; but this was a sinister Don Quixote, a man of no delusions, a terrible Don Quixote.

The old man, in spite of his look of severity, betrayed nevertheless the timidity and weakness that poverty gives to the unfortunate. And these two feelings seemed to have

graven lives of ruin on a face so strongly framed that the destroying pickaxe of misery had rough-hewn it. The mouth was expressive and grave. Don Quixote was crossed with the President de Montesquieu.

The man's dress was of black cloth throughout, but utterly threadbare; the coat, old-fashioned in cut, and the trousers showed many badly-executed patches. The buttons had been recently renewed. The coat was fastened up to the chin, showing no linen, and a rusty-black stock covered the absence of a collar. These black clothes, worn for many years, reeked of penury. But the mysterious old man's air of dignity, his gait, the mind that dwelt behind that brow and lighted up those eyes, seemed irreconcilable with poverty. An observer would have found it hard to class this Parisian.

Monsieur Bernard was so absent-minded that he might have been taken for a professor of the college-quarter, a learned man lost in jealous and overbearing meditation; and Godefroid was filled with excessive interest and a degree of curiosity to which his beneficent mission added a spur.

"Monsieur," said the old man presently, "if I were assured that all you seek is silence and privacy, I would say: 'Come and live near me.' Take the rooms," he went on in a louder voice, so that the widow might hear him, as she passed them, listening to what they were saying. "I am a father, monsieur, I have no one belonging to me in the world but my daughter and her son to help me to endure the miseries of life; but my daughter needs silence and perfect quiet. Every one who has hitherto come to take the rooms you wish to lodge in has yielded to the reasoning and the entreaties of a heartbroken father; they did not care in which street they settled of so desolate a part of the town, where cheap lodgings are plenty and boarding-houses at very low rates. But you, I see, are very much bent on it, and I can only beg you, monsieur, not to deceive me; for if you should, I can but leave and settle beyond the barrier. And, in the first place, a removal might

cost my daughter her life," he said in a broken voice, "and then, who knows whether the doctors who come to attend her —for the love of God—would come outside the gates?——"

If the man could have shed tears, they would have run down his cheeks as he spoke these last words; but there were tears in his voice, to use a phrase that has become commonplace, and he covered his brow with a hand that was mere bone and sinew.

"What, then, is the matter with madame, your daughter?" asked Godefroid in a voice of ingratiating sympathy.

"A terrible disease to which the doctors give a variety of names—or rather, which has no name. All my fortune went, was——"

But he checked himself, and said, with one of those movements peculiar to the unfortunate—

"The little money I had—for in 1830, dismissed from a high position, I found myself without an income—in short, everything I had was soon eaten up by my daughter, who had already ruined her mother and her husband's family. At the present time the pension I draw hardly suffices to pay for necessaries in the state in which my poor saintly daughter now is. She has exhausted all my power to weep.

"I have endured every torment, monsieur; I must be of granite still to live—or rather, God preserves the father that his child may still have a nurse or a providence, for her mother died of exhaustion.

"Ay, young man, you have come at a moment when this old tree that has never bent is feeling the axe of suffering, sharpened by poverty, cutting at its heart. And I, who have never complained to anybody, will tell you about this long illness to keep you from coming to the house—or, if you insist, to show you how necessary it is that our quiet should not be disturbed.

"At this moment, monsieur, day and night, my daughter barks like a dog."

"She is mad, then?" said Godefroid.

"She is in her right mind, and a perfect saint," replied Monsieur Bernard. "You will think that I am mad when I have told you all. My only daughter is the child of a mother who enjoyed excellent health. I never in my life loved but one woman—she was my wife. I chose her myself, and married for love the daughter of one of the bravest colonels in the Imperial Guard, a Pole formerly on the Emperor's staff, the gallant General Tarlovski. In the place I held strict morality was indispensable; but my heart is not adapted to accommodate many fancies—I loved my wife faithfully, and she deserved it. And I am as constant as a father as I was as a husband; I can say no more.

"My daughter never left her mother's care; no girl ever led a chaster or more Christian life than my dear child. She was more than pretty—lovely; and her husband, a young man of whose character I was certain, for he was the son of an old friend, a president of the supreme court, I am sure was in no way contributory to his wife's malady."

Monsieur Bernard and Godefroid involuntarily stood still a moment looking at each other.

"Marriage, as you know, often changes a woman's constitution," the old man went on. "My daughter's first child was safely brought into the world, a son—my grandson, who lives with us, and who is the only descendant of either of the united families. The second time my daughter was expecting an infant she had such singular symptoms that the physicians, all puzzled, could only ascribe them to the singular conditions which sometimes occur in such cases, and which are recorded in the memoirs of medical science. The infant was born dead, literally strangled by internal convulsions. Thus began the illness—temporary conditions had nothing to do with it. Perhaps you are a medical student?" Godefroid replied with a nod, which might be either negative or affirmative.

"After this disastrous child-bearing," Monsieur Bernard

went on—"a scene that made so terrible an impression on my son-in-law that it laid the foundations of the decline of which he died—my daughter, at the end of two or three months, complained of general debility, more particularly affecting her feet, which felt, as she described it, as if they were made of cotton. This weakness became paralysis, but what a strange form of paralysis! You may bend my daughter's feet under her, twist them round, and she feels nothing. The limbs are there, but they seem to have no blood, no flesh, no bones. This condition, which is unlike any recognized disease, has attacked her arms and hands; it is supposed to be connected with her spine. Doctors and suggested remedies have only made her worse; my poor child cannot move without dislocating her hips, shoulders, or wrists. We have had for a long time an excellent surgeon, almost in the house, who makes it his care, with the help of a doctor—or doctors, for several have seen her out of curiosity—to replace the joints—would you believe me, monsieur?—as often as three or four times a day.

"Ah! I was forgetting to tell you—for this illness has so many forms—that during the early weak stage, before paralysis supervened, my daughter was liable to the most extraordinary attacks of catalepsy. You know what catalepsy is. She would lie with her eyes open and staring, sometimes in the attitude in which the fit seized her. She has had the most incredible forms of this affection, even attacks of tetanus.

"This phase of the disease suggested to me the application of mesmerism as a cure when I saw her so strangely paralyzed. Then, monsieur, my daughter became miraculously clairvoyante, her mind was subject to every marvel of somnambulism, as her body is to every form of disease."

Godefroid was indeed wondering whether the old man were quite sane.

"For my part," he went on, heedless of the expression of Godefroid's eyes, "I, brought up on Voltaire, Diderot, and

Helvétius, am a son of the eighteenth century, of the Revolution; and I laughed to scorn all the records handed down from antiquity and middle ages of persons possessed—yes, and yet *possession* is the only explanation of the state my child is in. Even in her mesmeric sleep she has never been able to reveal the cause of her sufferings; she could not see it; and the methods of treatment suggested by her under those conditions, though carefully followed, have had no good result. For instance, she said she must be wrapped in a freshly killed pig; then she was to have points of highly magnetized red-hot iron applied to her legs; to have melted sealing-wax on her spine. And what a wreck she became; her teeth fell out; she became deaf, and then dumb; and suddenly, after six months of perfect deafness and silence, she recovered hearing and speech. She occasionally recovers the use of her hands as unexpectedly as she loses it, but for seven years she has never known the use of her feet.

"She has sometimes had well-defined and characteristic attacks of hydrophobia. Not only may the sight or sound of water, of a glass or a cup, rouse her to frenzy, but she barks like a dog, a melancholy bark, or howls, as dogs do at the sound of an organ.

"She has several times seemed to be dying, and has received the last sacraments, and then come back to life again to suffer with full understanding and clearness of mind, for her faculties of heart and brain remain unimpaired. Though she is alive, she has caused the death of her husband and her mother, who could not stand such repeated trials. Alas! Nor is this all. Every function of nature is perverted; only a medical man could give you a complete account of the strange condition of every organ.

"In this state did I bring her to Paris from the country in 1829; for the famous physicians to whom I described the case—Desplein, Bianchon, and Haudry—believed I was trying to impose upon them. At that time magnetism was stoutly

denied by the schools. Without throwing any doubt on the provincial doctors' good faith or mine, they thought there was some inaccuracy, or, if you like, some exaggeration, such as is common enough in families or in the sufferers themselves. But they have been obliged to change their views; to these phenomena, indeed, it is due that nervous diseases have of late years been made the subject of investigation, for this strange case is now classed as nervous. The last consultation held by these gentlemen led them to give up all medicine; they decided that nature must be studied, but left to itself; and since then I have had but one doctor—the doctor who attends the poor of this district. In fact, all that can be done is done to alleviate her sufferings, since their causes remain unknown."

The old man paused, as if this terrible confession were too much for him.

"For five years now my daughter has lived through alternations of amendment and relapse; but no new symptoms have appeared. She suffers more or less from the various forms of nervous attack which I have briefly described to you; but the paralysis of the legs and organic disturbances are constant. Our narrow means—increasingly narrow—compelled us to move from the rooms I took in 1829 in the Rue du Roule; and as my daughter cannot bear being moved, and I nearly lost her twice, first in coming to Paris, and then in moving here from the Beaujon side, I took the lodging in which we now are, foreseeing the disasters which ere long overtook us; for, after thirty years' service, I was kept waiting for my pension till 1833. I have drawn it only for six months, and the new government has crowned its severities by granting me only the minimum."

Godefroid expressed such surprise as seemed to demand entire confidence, and so the old man understood it, for he went on at once, not without a reproachful glance toward heaven.

"I am one of the thousand victims to political reaction. I carefully hide a name that is obnoxious to revenge; and if the lessons of experience ever avail from one generation to the next, remember, young man, never to lend yourself to the severity of any *side* in politics. Not that I repent of having done my duty, my conscience is at peace; but the powers of to-day have ceased to have that sense of common responsibility which binds governments together, however dissimilar; when zeal meets with a reward, it is the result of transient fear. The instrument, having served its purpose, is, sooner or later, completely forgotten. In me you see one of the stanchest supporters of the throne under the elder branch of the Bourbons, as I was, too, of the Imperial rule, and I am a beggar! As I am too proud to ask charity, no one will ever guess that I am suffering intolerable ills.

"Five days since, monsieur, the district medical officer who attends my daughter, or who watches the case, told me that he had no hope of curing a disease of which the symptoms vary every fortnight. His view is that neurotic patients are the despair of the faculty because the causes lie in a system that defies investigation. He advises me to call in a certain Jewish doctor, who is spoken of as a quack; but at the same time he remarked that he was a foreigner, a Polish refugee, and that physicians are extremely jealous of certain extraordinary cures that have been much talked of; some people regard him as very learned and skillful.

"But he is exacting and suspicious; he selects his patients, and will not waste time; and then he is—a communist. His name is Halpersohn. My grandson has called on him twice, but in vain; for he has not yet been to the house, and I understand why."

"Why?" asked Godefroid.

"Oh, my grandson, who is sixteen, is worse clothed even than I am; and, will you believe me, monsieur, I dare not show myself to this doctor; my dress is too ill-suited

to what is expected in a man of my age, and of some dignity, too. If he should see the grandfather so destitute as I am when the grandson has shown himself in the same sorry plight, would he devote due care to my daughter? He would treat her as paupers are always treated. And you must remember, monsieur, that I love my daughter for the grief she has caused me, as of old I loved her for the care she lavished upon me. She has become a perfect angel. Alas! She is now no more than a soul—a soul that beams on her son and on me; her body is no more, for she has triumphed over pain.

"Imagine what a spectacle for a father! My daughter's world is her bedroom. She must have flowers which she loves; she reads a great deal; and when she has the use of her hands, she works like a fairy. She knows nothing of the misery in which we live. Our life is such a strange one, that we can admit no one to our rooms. Do you understand me, monsieur? Do you see that a neighbor is intolerable? I should have to ask so much of him that I should be under the greatest obligations—and I could never discharge them. In the first place, I have no time for anything: I am educating my grandson, and I work so hard, monsieur—so hard, that I never sleep for more than three or four hours at night."

"Monsieur," said Godefroid, interrupting the old man, to whom he had listened attentively while watching him with grieved attention, "I will be your neighbor, and I will help you——"

The old gentleman drew himself up with pride, indeed, with impatience, for he did not believe in any good thing in man.

"I will help you," repeated Godefroid, taking the old man's hands and pressing them warmly, "in such ways as I can. Listen to me. What do you intend to make of your grandson?"

"He is soon to begin studying the law; I mean him to be an advocate."

"Then your grandson will cost you six hundred francs a year, and you——"

The old man said nothing.

"I have nothing," said Godefroid after a pause, "but I have influence; I will get at the Jewish doctor; and if your daughter is curable, she shall be cured. We will find means of paying this Halpersohn."

"Oh, if my daughter were cured, I would make the sacrifice that can be made but once; I would give up what I am saving for a rainy day."*

"You may keep that too."

"Ah! what a thing it is to be young!" said the old man, shaking his head. "Good-by, monsieur, or rather *au revoir*. The library is open, and as I have sold all my books, I have to go there every day for my work.

"I am grateful to you for the kind feeling you have shown; but we must see whether you can show me such consideration as I am obliged to require of a neighbor. That is all I ask of you——"

"Yes, monsieur, pray accept me as your neighbor; for Barbet, as you know, is not the man to put up long with empty rooms, and you might meet with a worse companion in misery than I. I do not ask you to believe in me, only to allow me to be of use to you."

"And what interest can you have in serving me?" cried the old man, as he was about to go down the steps of the cloister of the Carthusians, through which there was at that time a passage from the broad walk of the Luxembourg to the Rue d'Enfer.

"Have you never, in the course of your career, obliged anybody?"

The old man looked at Godefroid with knit brows, his eyes vague with reminiscence, like a man searching through the record of his life for an action for which he might deserve such

* Lit. trans.: I will sell the pear I have kept for a thirsty day.

rare gratitude; then he coldly turned away, after bowing with evident suspicion.

"Come! for a first meeting he was not particularly distant," said the disciple to himself.

Godefroid went at once to the Rue d'Enfer, the address given him by Monsieur Alain, and found Doctor Berton at home--a stern, cold man, who surprised him greatly by assuring him that the details given by Monsieur Bernard of his daughter's illness were absolutely correct; he then went in search of Doctor Halpersohn, whose address he obtained from Monsieur Berton.

The Polish physician, since so famous, at that time lived at Chaillot, in a little house in the Rue Marbeuf, of which he occupied the second floor. General Roman Zarnovicki lived on the first floor, and the servants of the two refugees occupied the attics of the little hotel, only one story high. Godefroid did not see the doctor; he had been sent for to some distance in the country by a rich patient. But Godefroid was almost glad not to have met him, for in his haste he had neglected to provide himself with money, and was obliged to return to the Hôtel de la Chanterie to fetch some from his room.

These walks, and the time it took to dine in a restaurant in the Rue de l'Odéon, kept him busy till the hour when he was to take possession of his lodgings on the Boulevard Mont-Parnasse.

Nothing could be more wretched than the furniture provided by Madame Vauthier for the two rooms. It seemed as though the woman was in the habit of letting rooms not to be inhabited. The bed, the chairs, the tables, the drawers, the desk, the curtains, had all evidently been purchased at sales under compulsion of the law, where the money-lender had kept them on account, no cash value being obtainable—a not infrequent case.

Madame Vauthier, her arms akimbo, expected thanks, and she took Godefroid's smile for one of surprise.

"Oh, yes, I have given you the best of everything, my dear Monsieur Godefroid," said she with an air of triumph. "Look what handsome silk curtains, and a mahogany bedstead that is not at all worm-eaten. It belonged to the Prince de Wissembourg, and was bought out of his mansion. When he left the Rue Louis-le-Grand, in 1809, I was scullery-maid in his kitchen, and from there I went to live with my landlord——"

Godefroid checked this confidential flow by paying his month's lodging in advance, and at the same time gave Madame Vauthier six francs, also in advance, for arranging and cleaning his rooms. At this moment he heard a bark; and if he had not been forewarned, he might have thought that his neighbor kept a dog in his lodgings.

"Does that dog bark at night?" he asked.

"Oh, be easy, sir, and have patience; there will not be above a week of it. Monsieur Bernard will not be able to pay his rent, and he will be turned out. Still, they are queer folk, I must say! I never saw their dog. For months that dog—for months, did I say? for six months at a time you will never hear that dog, and you might think they didn't keep one. The creature never comes out of madame's room. There is a lady who is very bad; she has never been out of her bed since they carried her in. Old Monsieur Bernard works very hard, and the son too, who is a day pupil at the Collége Louis-le-Grand, where he is in the top class for philosophy, and he is but sixteen. A bright chap that! but that little beggar works like a good 'un.

"You will hear them presently moving the flower-pots in the lady's room—for they eat nothing but dry bread, the old man and his grandson, but they buy flowers and nice things for her. She must be very bad, poor thing, never to have stirred out since she came; and if you take Monsieur Berton's

word—he is the doctor who comes to see her—she never will go out but feet foremost."

"And what is this Monsieur Bernard?"

"A very learned man, so they say; for he writes and goes to work in the public libraries, and the master lends him money on account of what he writes."

"The master—who?"

"The landlord, Monsieur Barbet, the old bookseller; he has been in business this sixteen years. He is a man from Normandy, who once sold salad in the streets, and who started as a dealer in old books on the quay, in 1818; then he set up a little store, and now he is very rich. He is a sort of old Jew who runs six-and-thirty businesses at once, for he was a kind of partner with the Italian who built this great barn to keep silkworms in——"

"And so the house is a place of refuge for authors in trouble?" said Godefroid.

"Are you so unlucky as to be one?" asked the widow Vauthier.

"I am only a beginner," said Godefroid.

"Oh, my good gentleman, for all the ill I wish you, never get any further! A newspaper man, now—I won't say——"

Godefroid could not help laughing, and he bid the woman good-night—a cook unconsciously representing the whole middle-class.

As he went to bed in the wretched room, floored with bricks that had not even been colored, and hung with paper at seven sous the piece, Godefroid not only regretted his little lodging in the Rue Chanoinesse, but more especially the society of Madame de la Chanterie. There was a great void in his soul. He had already acquired certain habits of mind, and he could not remember ever having felt such keen regrets for anything in his previous life. This comparison, brief as it was, made a great impression on his mind; he understood that no life he could lead could compare with that he was about to em-

brace, and his determination to follow in the steps of good Father Alain was thenceforth unchangeable. If he had not the vocation, he had the will.

Next morning, Godefroid, whose new way of life accustomed him to rising very early, saw, out of his window, a youth of about seventeen, wearing a blouse, and coming in evidently from a public fountain, carrying in each hand a pitcher full of water. The lad's face, not knowing that any one could see him, betrayed his thoughts; and never had Godefroid seen one more guileless and more sad. The charm of youth was depressed by misery, study, and great physical fatigue. Monsieur Bernard's grandson was remarkable for an excessively white skin, in strong contrast to very dark-brown hair. He made three expeditions; and the third time he saw a load of wood being delivered which Godefroid had ordered the night before; for the winter, though late, of 1838 was beginning to be felt, and there had been a slight fall of snow in the night.

Népomucène, who had just begun his day's work by fetching this wood, on which Madame Vauthier had already levied heavy toll, stood talking to the youth while waiting till the sawyer had cut up the logs for him to take indoors. It was very evident that the sight of this wood, and of the ominous gray sky, had reminded the lad of the desirability of laying in some fuel. And then suddenly, as if reproaching himself for waste of time, he took up the pitchers and hurried into the house. It was indeed half-past seven; and as he heard the quarters strike by the clock at the convent of the Visitation, he reflected that he had to be at the Collége Louis-le-Grand by half-past eight.

At the moment when the young man went in, Godefroid opened his door to Madame Vauthier, who was bringing up some live charcoal to her new lodger; so it happened that he witnessed a scene that took place on the landing. A gardener

living in the neighborhood, after ringing several times at Monsieur Bernard's door without arousing anybody, for the bell was muffled in paper, had a rough dispute with the youth, insisting on the money due for the hire of plants which he had supplied. As the creditor raised his voice, Monsieur Bernard came out.

"Auguste," said he to his grandson, "get dressed. It is time to be off."

He himself took the pitchers and carried them into the anteroom of his apartment, where Godefroid could see stands filled with flowers; then he closed the door and came outside to talk to the nurseryman. Godefroid's door was ajar, for Népomucène was passing in and out and piling up the logs in the second room. The gardener had become silent when Monsieur Bernard appeared, wrapped in a purple silk dressing-gown, buttoned to the chin, and looking really imposing.

"You might ask for the money we owe you without shouting," said the gentleman.

"Be just, my dear sir," replied the gardener. "You were to pay me week by week, and now, for three months—ten weeks—I have had no money, and you owe me a hundred and twenty francs. We are accustomed to hire out our plants to rich people, who give us our money as soon as we ask for it, and I have called here five times. We have our rent to pay and our workmen, and I am no richer than you are. My wife, who used to supply you with milk and eggs, will not call this morning either; you owe her thirty francs, and she would rather not come at all than come to nag, for she has a good heart, has my wife! If I listened to her, trade would never pay. And that is why I came, you understand, for that is not my way of looking at things, you see——"

Just then out came Auguste, dressed in a miserable green cloth coat, and trousers of the same, a black cravat, and shabby boots. These clothes, though brushed with care, re-

vealed the very last extremity of poverty, for they were too short and too tight, so that they looked as if the least movement on the lad's part would split them. The whitened seams, the dog's-eared corners, the worn-out button-holes, in spite of mending, betrayed to the least practiced eye the stigma of poverty. This garb contrasted painfully with the youthfulness of the wearer, who went off eating a piece of stale bread, in which his fine strong teeth left their mark. This was his breakfast, eaten as he made his way from the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse to the Rue Saint-Jacques, with his books and papers under his arm, and on his head a cap far too small for his powerful head and his mass of fine dark hair.

As he passed his grandfather, they exchanged rapid glances of deep dejection; for he saw that the old man was in almost irremediable difficulties of which the consequences might be terrible. To make way for the student of philosophy, the gardener retreated as far as Godefroid's door; and at the moment when he reached the door, Népomucène, with a load of wood, came up to the landing, driving the creditor quite to the window.

"Monsieur Bernard," exclaimed the widow, "do you suppose that Monsieur Godefroid took these rooms for you to hold meetings in?"

"I beg your pardon, madame," replied the nurseryman, "the landing was crowded——"

"I did not mean it for you, Monsieur Cartier," said the woman.

"Stay here!" cried Godefroid, addressing the nurseryman. "And you, my dear sir," he added, turning to Monsieur Bernard, whom this insolent remark left unmoved, "if it suits you to settle matters with your gardener in my room, pray come in."

The old gentleman, stupefied with trouble, gave Godefroid a stony look, which conveyed a thousand thanks.

"As for you, my dear Madame Vauthier, do not be so rough to monsieur, who, in the first place, is an old man, and to whom you also owe your thanks for having me as your lodger."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the woman.

"Beside, if poor folk do not help each other, who is to help them? Leave us, Madame Vauthier; I can blow up my own fire. See to having my wood stowed in your cellar; I have no doubt you will take good care of it."

Madame Vauthier vanished; for Godefroid, by placing his fuel in her charge, had afforded pasture to her greed.

"Come in," said Godefroid, signing to the gardener, and setting two chairs for the debtor and creditor. The old man talked standing; the tradesman took a seat.

"Come, my good man," Godefroid went on, "the rich do not always pay so punctually as you say they do, and you should not dun a worthy gentleman for a few louis. Monsieur draws his pension every six months, and he cannot give you a draft in anticipation for so small a sum; but I will advance the money if you insist on it."

"Monsieur Bernard drew his pension about three weeks since, and he did not pay me. I should be very sorry to annoy him——"

"What, and you have been supplying him with flowers for——"

"Yes, monsieur, for six years, and he has always paid until now."

Monsieur Bernard, who was listening to all that might be going on in his own lodgings, and paying no heed to this discussion, heard screams through the partition, and hurried away in alarm, without saying a word.

"Come, come, my good man, bring some fine flowers, your best flowers, this very morning, to Monsieur Bernard, and let your wife send in some fresh eggs and milk; I will pay you myself this evening."

Cartier looked somewhat askance at Godefroid.

"Well, I suppose you know more about it than Madame Vauthier; she sent me word that I had better look sharp if I meant to be paid," said he. "Neither she nor I, sir, can account for it when people who live on bread, who pick up odds and ends of vegetables, and bits of carrots and potatoes and turnips outside the eating-house doors—yes, sir, I have seen the boy filling a little basket—well, when those people spend near on a hundred francs a month on flowers. The old man, they say, has but three thousand francs a year for his pension——"

"At any rate," said Godefroid, "if they ruin themselves in flowers, it is not for you to complain."

"Certainly not, sir, so long as I am paid."

"Bring me your bill."

"Very good, sir," said the gardener, with rather more respect. "You hope to see the lady they hide so carefully, no doubt?"

"Come, come, my good fellow, you forget yourself," said Godefroid stiffly. "Go home and pick out your best flowers to replace those you are taking away. If you can supply me with rich milk and new-laid eggs, you may have my custom. I will go this morning and look at your place."

"It is one of the best in Paris, and I exhibit at the Luxembourg shows. I have three acres of garden on the boulevard, just behind that of the Grande-Chaumière" (great thatched cottage).

"Very good, Monsieur Cartier. You are richer than I am, I can see. So have some consideration for us; for who knows but that one day we may need each other."

The nurseryman departed, much puzzled as to what Godefroid could be.

"And time was when I was just like that!" said Godefroid to himself, as he blew the fire. "What a perfect specimen of the commonplace citizen; a gossip, full of curiosity,

possessed by the idea of equality, but jealous of other dealers; furious at not knowing why a poor invalid stays in her room and is never seen; secretive as to his profits, but vain enough to let out the secret if he could crow over his neighbor. Such a man ought to be lieutenant at least of his crew. How easily and how often in every age does the scene of Monsieur Dimanche recur! Another minute, and Cartier would have been my sworn ally!"

The old man's return interrupted this soliloquy, which shows how greatly Godefroid's ideas had changed during the past four months.

"I beg your pardon," said Monsieur Bernard, in a husky voice, "I see you have sent off the nurseryman quite satisfied, for he bowed politely. In fact, my young friend, Providence seems to have sent you here for our express benefit at the very moment when all seemed at an end. Alas! The man's chatter must have told you many things. It is quite true that I drew my half-year's pension a fortnight since; but I had other and more pressing debts, and I was obliged to keep back the money for the rent or be turned out of doors. You, to whom I have confided the secret of my daughter's state—who have heard her——"

He looked anxiously at Godefroid, who nodded affirmation.

"Well, you can judge if that would not be her death-blow. For I should have to place her in a hospital. My grandson and I have been dreading this day, not that Cartier was our chief fear; it is the cold——"

"My dear Monsieur Bernard, I have plenty of wood; take some!" cried Godefroid.

"But how can I ever repay such kindness?" said the old man.

"By accepting it without ceremony," answered Godefroid cordially, "and by giving me your entire confidence."

"But what claims have I on such generosity?" asked Monsieur Bernard with revived suspicions. "My pride and my grandson's is broken!" he exclaimed. "For we have already fallen so low as to argue with our two or three creditors. The very poor can have no creditors. Only those can owe money who keep up a certain external display which we have utterly lost. But I have not yet lost my commonsense, my reason," he added, as if speaking to himself.

"Monsieur," said Godefroid gravely, "the story you told me yesterday would draw tears from an usurer——"

"No, no! for Barbet the publisher, our landlord, speculates on my poverty, and sets his old servant, the woman Vauthier, to spy it out."

"How can he speculate on it?" asked Godefroid.

"I will tell you at another time," replied the old man. "My daughter may be feeling cold, and since you are so kind, and since I am in a situation to accept charity, even if it were from my worst enemy——"

"I will carry the wood," said Godefroid, who went across the landing with half a score of logs, which he laid down in his neighbor's outer room.

Monsieur Bernard had taken an equal number, and when he beheld this little stock of fuel, he could not conceal the simple, almost idiotic smile, by which men rescued from moral and apparently inevitable danger express their joy, for there is still fear even in their belief.

"Accept all I can give you, my dear Monsieur Bernard, without hesitation, and when we have saved your daughter, and you are happy once more, I will explain everything. Till then leave everything to me. I went to call on the Jewish doctor, but unfortunately Halpersohn is absent; he will not be back for two days."

Just then a voice which sounded to Godefroid, and which really was, sweet and youthful, called out, "Papa, papa!" in an expressive tone.

While talking to the old man, Godefroid had already remarked, through the crack of the door opposite to that on the landing, lines of neat white paint, showing that the sick woman's room must be very different from the others that composed the lodging. His curiosity was now raised to the highest pitch; the errand of mercy was to him no more than a means; its end was to see the invalid. He would not believe that any one who spoke in such a voice could be horrible to behold.

"You are taking too much trouble, papa," said the voice. "Why do not you have more servants—at your age? Dear me!"

"But you know, dear Vanda, that I will not allow any one to wait on you but myself or your boy."

These two sentences, which Godefroid overheard, though with some difficulty, for a curtain dulled the sound, made him understand the case. The sick woman, surrounded by every luxury, knew nothing of the real state in which her father and son lived. Monsieur Bernard's silk wrapper, the flowers, and his conversation with Cartier had already roused Godefroid's suspicions, and he stood riveted, almost confounded, by this marvel of paternal devotion. The contrast between the invalid's room as he imagined it and what he saw was in fact amazing. The reader may judge:

Through the door of a third room which stood open, Godefroid saw two narrow beds of painted wood like those of the vilest lodging-houses, with a straw mattress and a thin upper mattress; on each there was but one blanket. A small iron stove such as porters use to cook on, with a few lumps of dried fuel by the side of it, was enough to show the destitution of the owner, without other details in keeping with this wretched stove.

Godefroid by one step forward could see the pots and pans of the wretched household—glazed earthenware jars, in which a few potatoes were soaking in dirty water. Two tables of

blackened wood, covered with papers and books, stood in front of a window looking out on the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, and showed how the father and son occupied themselves in the evening. On each table there was a candlestick of wrought-iron of the poorest description, and in them candles of the cheapest kind, eight to the pound. On a third table, which served as a dresser, there were two shining sets of silver-gilt forks and spoons, some plates, a basin and cup in Sèvres china, and a knife with a gilt handle lying in a case, all evidently for the invalid's use.

The stove was alight; the water in the kettle was steaming gently. A wardrobe of painted deal contained no doubt the lady's linen and possessions, for he saw on her father's bed the clothes he had worn the day before, spread by way of a covering.

Some other rags laid in the same way on his grandson's bed led him to conclude that this was all their wardrobe; and under the bed he saw their shoes.

The floor, swept but seldom no doubt, was like that of a schoolroom. A large loaf that had been cut was visible on a shelf over the table. In short, it was poverty in the last stage of squalor, poverty reduced to a system, with the decent order of a determination to endure it; driven poverty that has to do everything at home, that insists on doing it, but that finds it impossible, and so puts every poor possession to a wrong use. A strong and sickening smell pervaded the room, which evidently was but rarely cleaned.

The anteroom where Godefroid stood was at any rate decent, and he guessed that it commonly served to hide the horrors of the room inhabited by the old man and the youth. This room, hung with a Scotch plaid paper, had four walnut-wood chairs and a small table, and was graced with portraits —a colored print of Horace Vernet's picture of the Emperor; those of Louis XVIII. and Charles X.; and one of Prince Poniatowski, a friend no doubt of Monsieur Bernard's father-

in-law. There were cotton window-curtains bound with red and finished with fringe.

Godefroid, keeping an eye on Népomucène, and hearing him come up with a load of wood, signed to him to stack it noiselessly in Monsieur Bernard's anteroom; and, with a delicate feeling that showed he was making good progress, he shut the bedroom door that Madame Vauthier's boy might not see the old man's squalor.

The anteroom was partly filled up by three flower-stands, full of splendid plants, two oval and one round, all three of rosewood, and elegantly finished; and Népomucène, as he placed the logs on the floor, could not help saying—

"Isn't that lovely? Ain't the flowers handsome? It must have cost a pretty penny!"

"Jean, do not make too much noise——" Monsieur Bernard called out.

"There, you hear him?" said Népomucène to Godefroid, "the poor old boy is certainly cracked!"

"And what will you be at his age?"

"Oh, I know sure enough!" said Népomucène; "I shall be in a sugar-basin."

"In a sugar-basin?"

"Yes, my bones will have been made into charcoal. I have seen the sugar-boilers' carts often enough at Mont-Souris come to fetch bone-black for their works, and they told me they used it in making sugar." And with this philosophical reply, he went off for another basketful of wood.

Godefroid quietly closed Monsieur Bernard's door, leaving him alone with his daughter.

Madame Vauthier had meanwhile prepared her new lodger's breakfast, and came with Félicité to serve it. Godefroid, lost in meditation, was staring at the fire on the hearth. He was absorbed in reflecting on this poverty that included so many different forms of misery, though he perceived that it had its pleasures too; the ineffable joys and triumphs of

fatherly and of filial devotion. They were like pearls sewn on sackcloth.

"What romance—even the most famous—can compare with such reality?" thought he. "How noble is the life that mingles with such lives as these, enabling the soul to discern their cause and effect; to assuage suffering and encourage what is good; to become one with misfortune and learn the secrets of such a home as this; to be an actor in ever-new dramas such as delight us in the works of the most famous authors! I had no idea that goodness could be more interesting than vice."

"Is everything to your mind, sir?" asked Madame Vauthier, who, helped by Félicité, had placed the table close to Godefroid. He then saw an excellent cup of coffee with milk, a smoking hot omelette, fresh butter, and little red radishes.

"Where did you find those radishes?" asked Godefroid.

"Monsieur Cartier gave them to me," said she. "I thought you might like them, sir."

"And what do you expect me to pay for a breakfast like this every day?" said Godefroid.

"Well, monsieur, to be quite fair—it would be hard to supply it under thirty sous."

"Say thirty sous," said Godefroid. "But how is it that close by this, at Madame Machillot's, they only ask me forty-five francs a month for dinner, which is just thirty sous a day?"

"Oh, but what a difference, sir, between getting a dinner for fifteen people and going to buy everything that is needed for one breakfast: a roll, you see, eggs, butter—lighting the fire—and then sugar, milk, coffee. Why, they will ask you sixteen sous for nothing but a cup of coffee with milk in the Place de l'Odéon, and you have to give a sou or two to the waiter! Here you have no trouble at all; you breakfast at home, in your slippers."

"Well, then, it is settled," said Godefroid.

"And even then, but for Madame Cartier, from whom I get the milk and eggs and parsley, I could not do it at all. You must go and see their place, sir. Oh, it is really a fine sight. They employ five gardeners' apprentices, and Népomucène goes to help with the watering all the summer; they pay me to let him go. And they make a lot of money out of strawberries and melons. You are very much interested in Monsieur Bernard, it would seem?" asked the widow in her sweetest tones. "For really to answer for their debts in that way! But perhaps you don't know how much they owe. There is the lady that keeps the circulating library on the Place Saint-Michel; she calls every three or four days for thirty francs, and she wants it badly too. Heaven above! that poor woman in bed does read and read. And at two sous a volume, thirty francs in two months——"

"Is a hundred volumes a month," said Godefroid.

"There goes the old fellow to fetch madame's cream and roll," the woman went on. "It is for her tea; for she lives on nothing but tea, that lady; she has it twice a day, and then twice a week she wants sweets. She is dainty, I can tell you! The old boy buys her cakes and pies at the pastry-cook's in the Rue de Buci. Oh, when it is for her, he sticks at nothing. He says she is his daughter! Where's the man who would do all he does, and at his age, for his daughter? He is killing himself—himself and his Auguste—and all for her. If you are like me, sir—I would give twenty francs to see her. Monsieur Berton says she is shocking, an object to make a show of. They did well to come to this part of the town where nobody ever comes. And you think of dining at Madame Machillot's, sir?"

"Yes, I thought of making an arrangement with her."

"Well, sir, it is not to interfere with any plan of yours; but, take 'em as you find 'em, you will find a better eating-place in the Rue de Tournon; you need not bind yourself for a month, and you will have a better table——"

"Where in the Rue de Tournon?"

"At the successors of old Madame Girard. That is where the gentlemen upstairs dine, and they are satisfied—they could not be better pleased."

"Very well, Madame Vauthier, I will take your advice and dine there."

"And, my dear sir," the woman went on, emboldened by the easy-going air which Godefroid had intentionally assumed, "do you mean to say, seriously, that you are such a flat as to think of paying Monsieur Bernard's debts? I should be really very sorry; for you must remember, my good Monsieur Godefroid, that he is very near on seventy, and after him where are you? There's an end to his pension. What will there be to repay you? Young men are so rash. Do you know that he owes above a thousand crowns?"

"But to whom?" asked Godefroid.

"Oh, that is no concern of mine," said Madame Vauthier mysteriously. "He owes the money, and that's enough; and between you and me, he is having a hard time of it; he cannot get credit for a sou in all the neighborhood for that very reason."

"A thousand crowns!" said Godefroid. "Be sure of one thing; if I had a thousand crowns, I should be no lodger of yours. But I, you see, cannot bear to see others suffering; and for a few hundred francs that it may cost me, I will make sure that my neighbor, a man with white hair, has bread and firing. Why, a man often loses as much at cards. But three thousand francs—why, what do you think? Good heavens!"

Madame Vauthier, quite taken in by Godefroid's affected candor, allowed a gleam of satisfaction to light up her face, and this confirmed her lodger's suspicions. Godefroid was convinced that the old woman was implicated in some plot against the hapless Monsieur Bernard.

"It is a strange thing, monsieur, what fancies come into

one's head. You will say that I am very inquisitive; but yesterday, when I saw you talking to Monsieur Bernard, it struck me that you must be a publisher's clerk—for this is their part of the town. I had a lodger, a foreman printer, whose works are in the Rue de Vaugirard, and he was named the same name as you——"

"And what concern is it of yours what my business is?" said Godefroid.

"Lor'! whether you tell me or whether you don't, I shall know just the same," said the widow. "Look at Monsieur Bernard, for instance; well, for eighteen months I could never find out what he was; but in the nineteenth month I discovered that he had been a judge or a magistrate, or something of the kind, in the law, and that now he is writing a book about it. What does he get by it? That's what I say. And if he had told me, I should have held my tongue; so there!"

"I am not at present a publisher's agent, but I may be, perhaps, before long."

"There, I knew it!" exclaimed the woman eagerly, and turning from the bed she was making as an excuse to stay chattering to her lodger. "You have come to cut the ground from under—— Well, well, a 'nod's as good as a wink'——"

"Hold hard!" cried Godefroid, standing between Madame Vauthier and the door. "Now, tell me, what are you paid for meddling in this?"

"Heyday!" cried the old woman, with a keen look at Godefroid. "You are pretty sharp after all!"

She shut and locked the outer door; then she came back and sat down by the fire.

"On my word and honor, as sure as my name is Vauthier, I took you for a student till I saw you giving your logs to old Father Bernard. My word, but you're a sharp one! By the Piper, you can play a part well! I thought you were a perfect flat. Now, will you promise me a thousand francs?

For as sure as the day above us, old Barbet and Monsieur Métivier have promised me five hundred if I keep my eyes open."

"What? Not they! Two hundred at the very outside, my good woman, and only promised at that—and you cannot summons them for payment! Look here; if you will put me in a position to get the job they are trying to manage with Monsieur Bernard, I will give you four hundred! Come, now, what are they up to?"

"Well, they have paid him fifteen hundred francs on account for his work, and made him sign a bill for a thousand crowns. They doled it out to him a hundred francs at a time, contriving to keep him as poor as poor. They set the duns upon him; they sent Cartier, you may wager."

At this, Godefroid, by a look of cynical perspicacity that he shot at the woman, made it clear to her that he quite understood the game she was playing for her landlord's benefit. Her speech threw a light on two sides of the question, for it also explained the rather strange scene between the gardener and himself.

"Oh, yes!" she went on, "they have him fast; for wherever is he to find a thousand crowns! They intend to offer him five hundred francs when the work is in their hands complete, and five hundred francs per volume as they are brought out for sale. The business is all in the name of a bookseller these gentlemen have set up in business on the Quai des Augustins——"

"Oh, yes—that little—what's-his-name?"

"Yes, that's your man. Morand, formerly Monsieur Barbet's agent. There is a heap of money to be got out of it, it would seem."

"There will be a heap of money to put into it," said Godefroid, with an expressive grimace.

There was a gentle knock at the door, and Godefroid, very glad of the interruption, rose to open it.

"All this is between you and me, Mother Vauthier," said Godefroid, seeing Monsieur Bernard.

"Monsieur Bernard," cried she, "I have a letter for you."

The old man went down a few steps.

"No, no, I have no letter for you, Monsieur Bernard; I only wished to warn you against that young fellow there. He is a publisher."

"Oh, that accounts for everything," said the old man to himself. And he came back to his neighbor's room with a quite altered countenance.

The calmly cold expression on Monsieur Bernard's face when he reappeared was in such marked contrast to the frank and friendly manner his gratitude had lent him, that Godefroid was struck by so sudden a change.

"Monsieur, forgive me for disturbing your solitude, but you have since yesterday loaded me with favors, and a benefactor confers rights on those whom he obliges."

Godefroid bowed.

"I, who for five years have suffered once a fortnight the torments of the Redeemer; I, who for six-and-thirty years was the representative of Society and the Government, who was then the arm of public vengeance, and who, as you may suppose, have no illusions left—nothing, nothing but sufferings. Well, monsieur, your careful attention in closing the door of the dog-kennel in which my grandson and I sleep—that trifling act was to me the cup of water of which Bossuet speaks. I found in my heart, my worn-out heart, which is as dry of tears as my withered body is of sweat, the last drop of that elixir which in youth leads us to see the best side of every human action, and I came to offer you my hand, which I never give to any one but my daughter; I came to bring you the heavenly rose of belief, even now, in goodness."

"Monsieur Bernard," said Godefroid, remembering good old Alain's injunctions, "I did nothing with a view to winning your gratitude. You are under a mistake."

"That is frank and above board," said the old lawyer. "Well, that is what I like. I was about to reproach you. Forgive me; I esteem you. So you are a publisher, and you want to get my book in preference to Messieurs Barbet, Métivier, and Morand? That explains all. You are prepared to deal with me as they were; only you do it with a good grace."

"Old Vauthier has just told you, I suppose, that I am a publisher's agent?"

"Yes," said he.

"Well, Monsieur Bernard, before I can say what we are prepared to *pay* more than those gentlemen *offer*, I must understand on what terms you stand with them."

"Very true," said the old man, who seemed delighted to find himself the object of a competition by which he could not fail to benefit. "Do you know what the work is?"

"No; I only know that there is something to be made by it."

"It is only half-past nine; my daughter has had her breakfast, my grandson Auguste will not come in till a quarter to eleven. Cartier will not be here with the flowers for an hour—we have time to talk, monsieur—monsieur who?"

"Godefroid."

"Monsieur Godefroid. The book in question was planned by me in 1825, at a time when the Ministry, struck by the constant reduction of personal estate, drafted the Law of Entail and Seniority which was thrown out. I had observed many defects in our codes and in the fundamental principle of French law. The laws have been the subject of many important works; but all those treatises are essentially on jurisprudence; no one has been so bold as to study the results of the Revolution—or of Napoleon's rule, if you prefer it—as a whole, analyzing the spirit of these laws and the working of their application. That is, in general terms, the purpose of my book. I have called it the 'Spirit of the Modern

Laws.' It covers organic law as well as the codes—all the codes, for we have five! My book, too, is in five volumes, and a sixth volume of authorities, quotations, and references. I have still three months' work before me.

"The owner of this house, a retired publisher, scented a speculation. I, in the first instance, thought only of benefiting my country. This Barbet has got the better of me. You will wonder how a publisher could entrap an old lawyer; but you, monsieur, know my history, and this man is a money-lender. He has the sharp eye and the knowledge of the world that such men must have. His advances have just kept pace with my necessity; he has always come in at the very moment when despair has made me a defenseless prey."

"Not at all, my dear sir," said Godefroid. "He has simply kept Madame Vauthier as a spy. But the terms. Tell me honestly."

"They advanced me fifteen hundred francs, represented at the present rates by three bills for a thousand francs each, and these three thousand francs are secured to them by a lien on the property of my book, which I cannot dispose of elsewhere till I have paid off the bills; the bills have been protested; judgment has been pronounced. Here, monsieur, you see the complications of poverty.

"At the most moderate estimate, the first edition of this vast work, the result of ten years' labor and thirty-six years' experience, will be well worth ten thousand francs. Well, just five days since, Morand offered me a thousand crowns and my note of hand paid off for all rights. As I could never find three thousand two hundred and forty francs, unless you intervene between us, I must yield.

"They would not take my word of honor; for further security they insisted on bills of exchange which have been protested, and I shall be imprisoned for debt. If I pay up, these money-lenders will have doubled their loan; if I deal with them, they will make a fortune, for one of them was a paper-

maker, and God only knows how low they can keep the price of materials. And then, with my name to it, they know that they are certain of a sale of ten thousand copies."

"Why, monsieur—you, a retired judge——!"

"What can I say? I have not a friend, no one remembers me! And yet I saved many heads even if I sentenced many to fall! And then there is my daughter, my daughter whose nurse and companion I am, for I work only at night. Ah! young man, none but the wretched should be set to judge the wretched. I see now that of yore I was too severe."

"I do not ask you your name, monsieur. I have not a thousand crowns at my disposal, especially if I pay Halpersohn and your little bills; but I can save you if you will pledge your word not to dispose of your book without due notice to me; it is impossible to embark in so important a matter without consulting professional experts. The persons I work for are powerful, and I can promise you success if you can promise me perfect secrecy, even from your children—and keep your word."

"The only success I care for is my poor Vanda's recovery; for, I assure you, the sight of such sufferings extinguishes every other feeling in a father's heart; the loss of fame is nothing to the man who sees a grave yawning at his feet——"

"I will call on you this evening. Halpersohn may come home at any moment, and I go every day to see if he has returned. I will spend to-day in your service."

"Oh, if you could bring about my daughter's recovery, monsieur——, monsieur, I would make you a present of my book!"

"But," said Godefroid, "I am not a publisher."

The old man started with surprise.

"I could not help letting old Vauthier think so for the sake of ascertaining what snares had been laid for you."

"But who are you, then?"

"Godefroid," was the reply; "and as you have allowed

me to supply you with the means of living better," added the young man, smiling, "you may call me Godefroid de Bouillon."*

The old lawyer was too much touched to laugh at the jest. He held out his hand to Godefroid and grasped the young man's warmly.

"You wish to remain unknown?" said Monsieur Bernard, looking at Godefroid with melancholy, mixed with some uneasiness.

"If you will allow me."

"Well, do as you think proper. And come in this evening; you will see my daughter, if her state allows."

This was evidently the greatest concession the poor father could make; and seeing Godefroid's grateful look, the old man had the pleasure of feeling that he was understood.

An hour later Cartier came back with some beautiful flowers, replanted the stands with his own hands in fresh moss, and Godefroid paid the bill, as he did the subscription to the lending library, for which the account was sent in soon after. Books and flowers were the staff of life to this poor sick, or, rather, tormented woman, who could live on so little food.

As he thought of this family in the coils of disaster, like that of Laocoon—a sublime allegory of many lives!—Godefroid, making his way leisurely on foot to the Rue Marbeuf, felt in his heart that he was curious rather than benevolent. The idea of the sick woman, surrounded with luxuries in the midst of abject squalor, made him forget the horrible details of the strange nervous malady, which is happily an extraordinary exception, though abundantly proved by various historians. One of our gossiping chronicle writers, Tallemant des Réaux, mentions an instance. We like to think of women as elegant even in their worst sufferings, and Godefroid promised himself some pleasure in penetrating into the room which only

* A strong, clear soup.

the physician, the father, and the son had entered for six years past. However, he ended by reproaching himself for his curiosity. The neophyte even understood that his feeling, however natural, would die out by degrees as he carried out his merciful errands, by dint of seeing new homes and new sorrows. Such messengers, in fact, attain to a heavenly benignity which nothing can shock or amaze, just as in love we attain to a sublime quiescence of feeling in the conviction of its strength and duration, by a constant habit of submission and sweetness.

Godefroid was told that Halpersohn had come home during the night, but had been obliged to go out in his carriage the first thing in the morning to see the patients who were awaiting him. The woman at the gate told Godefroid to come back next morning before nine.

Remembering Monsieur Alain's advice as to parsimony in his personal expenses, Godefroid dined for twenty-five sous in the Rue de Tournon, and was rewarded for his self-denial by finding himself among compositors and proof-readers. He heard a discussion about the cost of production, and, joining in, picked up the information that an octavo volume of forty sheets, of which a thousand copies were printed, would not cost more than thirty sous per copy under favorable circumstances. He determined on going to inquire the price commonly asked for such volumes on sale at the law publishers, so as to be in a position to dispute the point with the publishers who had a hold on Monsieur Bernard, if he should happen to meet them.

At about seven in the evening he came back to the Boulevard Mont-Parnasse along the Rue de Vaugirard, the Rue Madame, and the Rue de l'Ouest, and he saw how deserted that part of the town is, for he met nobody. It is true that the cold was severe, snow fell in large flakes, and the carts made no noise on the stones.

"Ah, here you are, monsieur!" said Madame Vauthier

when she saw him. "If I had known you would come in so early, I would have lighted your fire."

"It is unnecessary," replied Godefroid, as the woman followed him; "I am going to spend the evening with Monsieur Bernard."

"Ah! very good. You are cousins, I suppose, that you are hand and glove with him by the second day. I thought, perhaps, you would have liked to finish what we were saying——"

"Oh, about the four hundred francs!" said Godefroid in an undertone. "Look here, Mother Vauthier, you would have had them this evening if you had said nothing to Monsieur Bernard. You want to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare, and you will get neither; for, so far as I am concerned, you have spoiled my game—my chances are altogether ruined——"

"Don't you believe that, my good sir. To-morrow, when you are at breakfast——"

"Oh, to-morrow I must be off at daybreak like your authors."

Godefroid's past experience and life as a dandy and journalist had been so far of use to him as to lead him to guess that if he did not take this line, Barbet's spy would warn the publisher that there was something in the wind, and he would then take such steps as would ere long endanger Monsieur Bernard's liberty; whereas, by leaving the three usurious negotiators to believe that their schemes were not in peril, they would keep quiet.

But Godefroid was not yet a match for Parisian humanity when it assumes the guise of a Madame Vauthier. This woman meant to have Godefroid's money and her landlord's too. She flew right off to Monsieur Barbet, while Godefroid changed his dress to call on Monsieur Bernard's daughter.

Eight o'clock was striking at the convent of the Visitation, whose clock regulated the life of the whole neighborhood, when Godefroid, very full of curiosity, knocked at his friend's

door. Auguste opened it; as it was Saturday, the lad spent his evening at home; Godefroid saw that he wore a jacket of black velvet, black trousers that were quite decent, and a blue silk tie; but his surprise at seeing the youth so unlike his usual self ceased when he entered the invalid's room. He at once understood the necessity for the father and the boy to be presentably dressed.

The walls of the room, hung with yellow silk, paneled with bright green cord, made the room look extremely cheerful; the cold tiled floor was covered by a flowered carpet on a white ground. The two windows, with their handsome curtains lined with white silk, were like bowers, the flower-stands were so full of beauty, and blinds hindered them from being seen from outside in a quarter where such lavishness was rare. The woodwork, painted white, and varnished, was touched up with gold lines. A heavy curtain, embroidered in tent-stitch with grotesque foliage on a yellow ground, hung over the door and deadened every sound from outside. This splendid curtain had been worked by the invalid, who embroidered like a fairy when she had the use of her hands.

Opposite the door, at the farther end of the room, the mantel-shelf, covered with green velvet, had a set of very costly ornaments, the only relic of the wealth of the two families. There was a very curious clock; an elephant supporting a porcelain tower filled with beautiful flowers; two candelabra in the same style, and some valuable Oriental pieces. The fender, the dogs, and and-irons were all of the finest workmanship.

The largest of the three flower-stands stood in the middle of the room, and above it hung a porcelain chandelier of floral design.

The bed on which the judge's daughter lay was one of those fine examples of carved wood, painted white and gold, that were made in the time of Louis XV. By the invalid's pillow was a pretty inlaid table, on which were the various

objects necessary for a life spent in bed; a light bracket for two candles was fixed to the wall, and could be turned backward and forward by a touch. In front of her was a bed-table, wonderfully contrived for her convenience. The bed was covered with a magnificent counterpane, and draped with curtains looped back in festoons; it was loaded with books and a work-basket, and among these various objects Godefroid would hardly have discovered the sick woman but for the tapers in the two candle-branches.

There seemed to be nothing of her but a very white face, darkly marked round the eyes by much suffering; her eyes shone like fire; and her principal ornament was her splendid black hair, of which the heavy curls, set out in bunches of numerous ringlets, showed that the care and arrangement of her hair occupied a great part of the invalid's day; a movable mirror at the foot of the bed confirmed the idea.

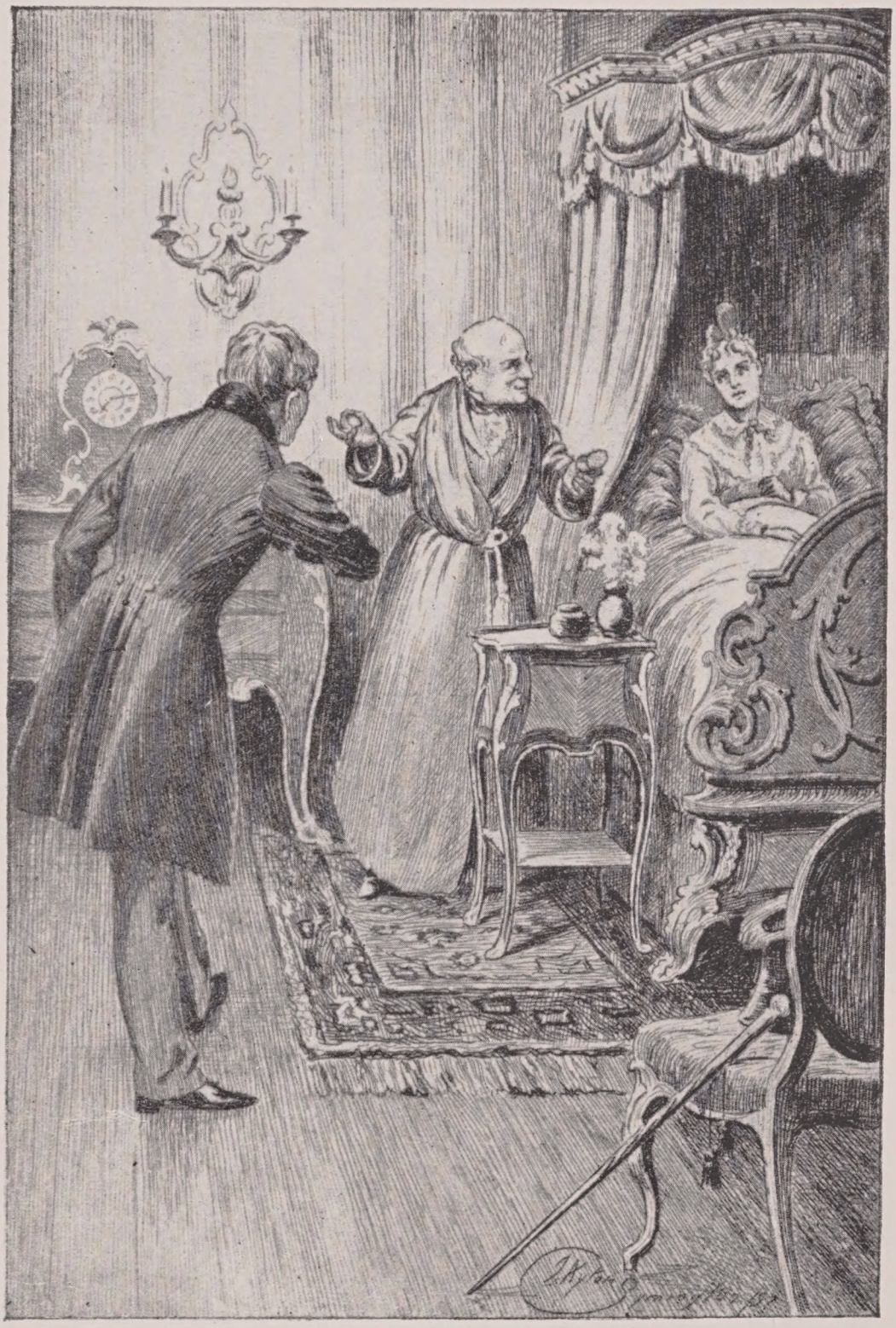
No kind of modern elegance was lacking, and a few trifling toys for poor Vanda's amusement showed that her father's affection verged on mania.

The old man rose from a very handsome easy-chair of Louis XV. style, white and gold, and covered with needlework, and went forward a few steps to welcome Godefroid, who certainly would not have recognized him; for his cold, stern face had assumed the gay expression peculiar to old men who have preserved their dignity of manner and the superficial frivolity of courtiers. His purple, wadded dressing-gown was in harmony with the luxury about him, and he took snuff out of a gold box set with diamonds.

"Here, my dear," said Monsieur Bernard to his daughter, "is our neighbor of whom I spoke to you." And he signed to his grandson to bring forward one of two armchairs, in the same style as his own, which were standing on either side of the fireplace.

"Monsieur's name is Godefroid, and he is most kind in standing on no ceremony——"

"HERE, MY DEAR, IS OUR NEIGHBOR OF WHOM I SPOKE TO YOU."



Vanda moved her head in acknowledgment of Godefroid's low bow; and by the movement of her throat as it bent and unbent, he discovered that all this woman's vitality was seated in her head. Her emaciated arms and lifeless hands lay on the fine white sheet like objects quite apart from the body, and that seemed to fill no space in the bed. The things needed for her use were on a set of shelves behind the bed, and screened by a silk curtain.

"You, my dear sir, are the first person, excepting only the doctors—who have ceased to be men to me—whom I have set eyes on for six years; so you can have no idea of the interest I have felt in you ever since my father told me you were coming to call on us. It was passionate, unconquerable curiosity, like that of our mother Eve. My father, who is so good to me; my son, of whom I am so fond, are undoubtedly enough to fill up the vacuum of a soul now almost bereft of body; but that soul is still a woman's after all! I recognized that in the childish joy I felt in the idea of your visit. You will do me the pleasure of taking a cup of tea with us, I hope?"

"Yes, Monsieur Godefroid has promised us the pleasure of his company for the evening," said the old man, with the air of a millionaire doing the honors of his house.

Auguste, seated in a low, worsted-work chair by a small table of inlaid wood, finished with brass mouldings, was reading a book by the light of the wax-candles on the elegant chimney-shelf.

"Auguste, my dear, tell Jean to bring tea in an hour's time."

She spoke with some pointed meaning, and Auguste replied by a nod.

"Will you believe, monsieur, that for the past six years no one has waited on me but my father and my boy, and I could not endure anybody else. If I were to lose them, I should die of it. My father will not even allow Jean, a poor old

Normandy peasant who has lived with us for thirty years—will not even let him come into the room."

"I should think not, indeed!" said the old man readily. "Monsieur Godefroid has seen him; he saws and brings in wood, he cooks and runs errands, and wears a dirty apron; he would have made hash of all these pretty things, which are so necessary to my poor child, to whom this elegance is second nature."

"Indeed, madame, your father is quite right——"

"But, why?" she urged. "If Jean had damaged my room, my father would have renewed it."

"Of course, my child; but what would have prevented me is the fact that you cannot leave it; and you have no idea what Paris workmen are. It would take them more than three months to restore your room. Only think of the dust that would come out of your carpet if it were taken up. Let Jean do your room! Do not think of such a thing. By taking the extreme care which only your father and your boy can take, we have spared you sweeping and dust; if Jean came in to help, everything would be broken and done for in a month."

"It is not so much out of economy as for the sake of your health," said Godefroid. "Monsieur your father is quite right."

"Oh, I am not complaining," said Vanda in a saucy tone.

Her voice had the quality of a concert; soul, action, and life were all concentrated in her eyes and her voice; for Vanda, by careful practice, for which time had certainly not been lacking, had succeeded in overcoming the difficulties arising from her loss of teeth.

"I am still happy, monsieur, in spite of the dreadful malady that tortures me; for wealth is certainly a great help in enduring my sufferings. If we had been in poverty, I should have died eighteen years ago, and I am still alive. I have many enjoyments, and they are all the keener because I live

on, triumphing over death. You will think me a great chatterbox," she added, with a smile.

"Madame," said Godefroid, "I could beg you to talk for ever, for I never heard a voice to compare with yours—it is music! Rubini is not more delightful——"

"Do not mention Rubini or the opera," said the old man sadly. "However rich we may be, it is impossible to give my daughter, who was a great musician, a pleasure to which she was devoted."

"I apologize," said Godefroid.

"You will fall into our ways," said the old man.

"This is your training," said the invalid, smiling. "When we have warned you several times by crying, 'Lookout!' you will know all the blindman's-buff of our conversation!"

Godefroid exchanged a swift glance with Monsieur Bernard, who, seeing tears in his new friend's eyes, put his finger to his lip as a warning not to betray the heroic devotion he and the boy had shown for the past seven years.

This devoted and unflagging imposture, proved by the invalid's entire deception, produced on Godefroid at this moment the effect of looking at a precipitous rock whence two chamois-hunters were on the point of falling.

The splendid gold and diamond snuff-box with which the old man trifled, leaning over the foot of his daughter's bed, was the same touch of genius which in a great actor wrings from us a cry of admiration. Godefroid looked at the snuff-box, wondering why it had not been sold or pawned, but he postponed the idea till he could discuss it with the old man.

"This evening, Monsieur Godefroid, my daughter was so greatly excited by the promise of your visit, that the various strange symptoms of her malady which, for nearly a fortnight past, have driven us to despair, suddenly disappeared. You may imagine my gratitude!"

"And mine!" cried Vanda, in an insinuating voice, with a graceful inclination of her head. "You are a deputation

from the outer world. Since I was twenty I have not known what a drawing-room is like, or a party, or a ball; and I love dancing, I am crazy about the play, and, above all, about music. Well, I imagine everything in my mind. I read a great deal, and my father tells me all about the gay world and its doings——"

As he listened, Godefroid felt prompted to kneel at the feet of this poor old man.

"When he goes to the opera—and he often goes—he describes the dresses to me and all the singers. Oh! I should like to be well again; in the first place, for my father's sake, for he lives for me alone, as I live for him and through him, and then for my son's—I should like him to know another mother. Oh! monsieur, what perfect men are my dear old father and my admirable son! Then, I could wish for health also, that I might hear Lablache, Rubini, Tamburini, Grisi, the 'Puritani' too! But——"

"Come, my dear, compose yourself. If we talk about music, it is fatal!" said the old father, with a smile.

And that smile, which made him look younger, evidently constantly deceived the sick woman.

"Well, I will be good," said Vanda, with a saucy pout. "But let me have a melodeon."

This instrument had lately been invented; it could, by a little contrivance, be placed by the invalid's bed, and would only need the pressure of the foot to give out an organ-like tone. This instrument, in its most improved form, was as effective as a piano; but at that time it cost three hundred francs. Vanda, who read newspapers and reviews, had heard of such an instrument, and had been longing for one for two months past.

"Yes, madame, and I can procure you one," replied Godefroid at an appealing glance from the old man. "A friend of mine who is setting out for Algiers has a very fine one, which I will borrow of him; for before buying one, you had

better try it. It is quite possible that the sound, which is strongly vibrating, may be too much for you."

"Can I have it to-morrow?" she asked with the eagerness of a creole.

"To-morrow!" objected Monsieur Bernard. "That is very soon; beside, to-morrow will be Sunday."

"To be sure," said she, looking at Godefroid, who felt as though he saw a soul fluttering as he admired the ubiquity of Vanda's eyes.

Until now he had never understood what the power of the voice and eyes might be when the entire vitality was concentrated in them. Her glance was more than a glance; it was a flame, or, rather, a blaze of divine light, a communicative ray of life and intelligence, thought made visible. The voice, with its endless intonations, supplied the place of movement, gesture, and turns of the head. And her changing color, varying like that of the fabled chameleon, made the illusion—or, if you will, the delusion—complete. That weary head, buried in a cambric pillow frilled with lace, was a complete woman.

Never in his life had Godefroid seen so noble a spectacle, and he could hardly endure his emotions. Another grand feature, where everything was strange in a situation so full of romance and of horror, was that the soul alone seemed to be living in the spectators. This atmosphere, where all was sentiment, had a celestial influence. They were as unconscious of their bodies as the woman in bed; everything was pure spirit. By dint of gazing at these frail remains of a pretty woman, Godefroid forgot the elegant luxury of the room, and felt himself in heaven. It was not till half-an-hour after that he noticed a whatnot covered with curiosities, over which hung a noble portrait that Vanda desired him to look it, as it was by Géricault.

"Géricault," said she, "was a native of Rouen, and his family being under some obligations to my father, who was

president of the supreme court there, he showed his gratitude by painting that masterpiece, in which you see me at the age of sixteen."

"You have there a very fine picture," said Godefroid, "and one that is quite unknown to those who have studied the rare works of that great genius."

"To me it is no longer an object of anything but affectionate regard," said she, "since I live only by my feelings; and I have a beautiful life," she went on, looking at her father with her whole soul in her eyes. "Oh, monsieur, if you could but know what my father is! Who would believe that the austere and dignified judge to whom the Emperor owed so much that he gave him that snuff-box, and whom Charles X. rewarded by the gift of that Sèvres tray"—and she looked at a side-table—"that the stanch upholder of law and authority, the learned political writer, has in a heart of rock all the tenderness of a mother! Oh, papa, papa! Come, kiss me—I insist on it—if you love me."

The old man rose, leaned over the bed, and set a kiss on his daughter's high poetic brow, for her sickly fancies were not invariably furies of affection. Then he walked up and down the room, but without a sound, for he wore slippers—the work of his daughter's hands.

"And what is your occupation?" she asked Godefroid after a pause.

"Madame, I am employed by certain pious persons to take help to the unfortunate."

"A beautiful mission!" said she. "Do you know that the idea of devoting myself to such work has often occurred to me? But what ideas have not occurred to me?" said she, with a little shake of her head. "Pain is a torch that throws light on life, and if I ever recover my health——"

"You shall enjoy yourself, my child," the old man put in.

"Certainly I long to enjoy life," said she, "but should I be able for it? My son, I hope, will be a lawyer, worthy of his

two grandfathers, and he must leave me. What is to be done? If God restores me to life, I will dedicate it to Him. Oh, not till I have given you both as much of it as you desire!" she exclaimed, looking at her father and her boy. "There are times, my dear father, when Monsieur de Maistre's ideas work in my brain, and I fancy I am expiating some sin."

"That is what comes of so much reading!" cried the old man, visibly grieved.

"There was that brave Polish general, my great-grandfather; he meddled very innocently in the concerns of Poland——"

"Now we have come back to Poland!" exclaimed Bernard.

"How can I help it, papa? My sufferings are intolerable, they make me hate life and disgust me with myself. Well, what have I done to deserve them? Such an illness is not merely disordered health; it is a complete wreck of the whole constitution, and——"

"Sing the national air your poor mother used to sing; it will please Monsieur Godefroid, I have spoken to him of your voice," said her father, evidently quite anxious to divert his daughter's mind from the ideas she was following out.

Vanda began to sing in a low, soft voice a hymn in the Polish tongue, which left Godefroid bewildered with admiration and sadness. This melody, a good deal like the long-drawn melancholy tunes of Brittany, is one of those poetic airs that linger in the mind long after being heard. As he listened to Vanda, Godefroid at first looked at her; but he could not bear the ecstatic eyes of this remnant of a woman, now half-crazed, and he gazed at some tassels that hung on each side of the top of the bed.

"Ah, ha!" said Vanda, laughing at Godefroid's evident curiosity, "you are wondering what those are for?"

"Vanda, Vanda, be calm, my child! See, here comes the tea. This, monsieur, is a very expensive contrivance," he said to Godefroid. "My daughter cannot raise herself, nor

can she remain in bed without its being made and the sheets changed. Those cords work over pulleys, and by slipping a sheet of leather under her and attaching it by rings at the corners to those ropes, we can lift her without fatiguing her or ourselves."

"Yes, I am carried up—up!" said Vanda deliriously.

Auguste happily came in with a teapot, which he set on a little table, where he also placed the Sèvres tray, covered with sandwiches and cakes. Then he brought in the cream and butter. This diverted the sick woman's mind; she had been on the verge of an attack.

"Here, Vanda, is Nathan's last novel. If you should lie awake to-night, you will have something to read."

"'La Perle de Dol!'—The Pearl of Deceit. That will be a love-story no doubt. Auguste, what do you think? I am to have a melodeon!"

Auguste raised his head quickly, and looked strangely at his grandfather.

"You see how fond he is of his mother!" Vanda went on. "Come and kiss me, dear rogue. No, it is not your grandfather that you must thank, but Monsieur Godefroid; our kind neighbor promises to borrow one for me to-morrow morning. What is it like, monsieur?"

Godefroid, at a nod from the old man, gave a long description of the melodeon while enjoying the tea Auguste had made, which was of superior quality and delicious flavor.

At about half-past ten the visitor withdrew, quite overpowered by the frantic struggle maintained by the father and son, while admiring their heroism and the patience that enabled them, day after day, to play two equally exhausting parts.

"Now," said Monsieur Bernard, accompanying him to his own door, "now you know the life I lead! At every hour I have to endure the alarms of a robber, on the alert for everything. One word, one look might kill my daughter. One

toy removed from those she is accustomed to see about her would reveal everything to her, for mind sees through walls."

"Monsieur," said Godefroid, "on Monday Halpersohn will pronounce his opinion on your daughter, for he is at home again. I doubt whether science can restore her frame."

"Oh, I do not count upon it," said the old man with a sigh. "If they will only make her life endurable. I trusted to your tact, monsieur, and I want to thank you, for you understood. Ah! the attack has come on!" cried he, hearing a scream. "She has done too much——"

He pressed Godefroid's hand and hurried away.

At eight next morning Godefroid knocked at the famous doctor's door. He was shown up by the servant to a room on the second floor of the house, which he had had time to examine while the porter found the manservant.

Happily, Godefroid's punctuality had saved him the vexation of waiting, as he had hoped it might. He was evidently the first-comer. He was led through a very plain anteroom into a large study, where he found an old man in a dressing-gown, smoking a long pipe. The dressing-gown, of black moreen, was shiny with wear, and dated from the time of the Polish dispersion.

"What can I do to serve you?" said the Jew, "for you are not ill."

And he fixed Godefroid with a look that had all the sharp inquisitiveness of the Polish Jew, eyes which seemed to have ears.

To Godefroid's great surprise, Halpersohn was a man of fifty-six, with short bow-legs and a broad, powerful frame. There was an Oriental stamp about the man, and his face must in youth have been singularly handsome; the remains showed a markedly Jewish nose, as long and as curved as a Damascus scimitar. His forehead was truly Polish, broad and lofty, wrinkled all over like crumpled paper, and recall

ing that of a Saint-Joseph by some old Italian master. His eyes were sea-green, set like a parrot's in puckered gray lids, and expressive of cunning and avarice in the highest degree. His mouth, thin and straight, like a cut in his face, lent this sinister countenance a crowning touch of suspiciousness.

The pale, lean features—for Halpersohn was extraordinarily thin—were crowned by ill-kept gray hair, and graced by a very thick, long beard, black streaked with white, that hid half his face, so that only the forehead and eyes, the cheek-bones, nose, and lips were visible.

This man, a friend of the agitator Lelewel, wore a black velvet cap that came down in a point on his forehead and showed off its mellow hue, worthy of Rembrandt's brush.

The doctor, who subsequently became equally famous for his talents and his avarice, startled Godefroid by his question, and the young man asked himself: "Can he take me for a thief?"

The reply to the question was evident on the doctor's table and chimney-piece. Godefroid had fancied himself the first-comer—he was the last. His patients had laid very handsome sums on the table and shelf, for Godefroid saw piles of twenty and forty-franc pieces and two thousand-franc notes. Was all this the fruit of a single morning? He greatly doubted it, and he suspected an ingenious trick. The infallible but money-loving doctor perhaps tried thus to encourage his patients' liberality, and to make his rich clients believe that he was given bank-notes as if they were curl-papers.

Moïse Halpersohn was no doubt largely paid, for he cured his patients, and cured them of those very complaints which the profession gave up in despair. It is very little known in Western Europe that the Slav nations possess a store of medical secrets. They have a number of sovereign remedies derived from their intercourse with the Chinese, the Persians, the Cossacks, the Turks, and the Tartars. Some peasant women, regarded as witches, have been known to completely cure

hydrophobia in Poland with the juice of certain plants. There is among those nations a great mass of uncodified information as to the effects of certain herbs and the powdered bark of trees, which is handed down from family to family, and miraculous cures are effected thereby.

Halpersohn, who for five or six years was regarded as a charlatan, with his powders and mixtures, had the innate instinct of a great healer. Not only was he learned, he had observed with great care, and had traveled all over Germany, Russia, Persia, and Turkey, where he had picked up much traditional lore; and as he was learned in chemistry, he became a living encyclopedia of the secrets preserved by "the good women," as they were called, the midwives and "wise women" of every country whither he had followed his father, a wandering trader.

It must not be supposed that the scene in "Richard in Palestine," in which Saladin cures the King of England, is pure fiction. Halpersohn has a little silk bag, which he soaks in water till it is faintly colored, and certain fevers yield to this infusion taken by the patient. The virtues residing in plants are infinitely various, according to him, and the most terrible maladies admit of cure. He, however, like his brother physicians, pauses sometimes before the incomprehensible. Halpersohn admires the invention of Homœopathy, less for its medical system than for its therapeutics; he was at that time in correspondence with Hedenius of Dresden, Chelius of Heidelberg, and the other famous Germans, but keeping his own hand dark though it was full of discoveries. He would have no pupils.

The setting of this figure, which might have stepped out of a picture by Rembrandt, was quite in harmony with it. The study, hung with green flock paper, was poorly furnished with a green divan. The carpet, also of moss green, showed the thread. A large armchair covered with black leather, for the patients, stood near the window, which was hung with

green curtains. The doctor's seat was a study-chair with arms, in the Roman style, of mahogany with a green leather seat. Beside the mantel and the long table at which he wrote, there was in the middle of the wall opposite the fireplace a common iron chest supporting a clock of Vienna granite, on which stood a bronze group of Love sporting with Death, the gift of a famous German sculptor whom Halpersohn had, no doubt, cured. A tazza between two candlesticks was all the ornament of the mantel. Two bracket shelves, one at each end of the divan, served to place trays on, and Godefroid noted that there were silver bowls on them, water-bottles, and table-napkins.

This simplicity, verging on bareness, struck Godefroid, who took everything in at a glance, and he recovered his presence of mind.

"I am perfectly well, monsieur. I have not come to consult you myself, but on behalf of a lady whom you ought long since to have seen—a lady living on the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse."

"Oh, yes, that lady has sent her son to me several times. Well, monsieur, tell her to come to see me."

"Tell her to come!" cried Godefroid indignantly. "Why, monsieur, she cannot be lifted from her bed to a sofa; she has to be raised by straps."

"You are not a doctor?" asked the Jew, with a singular grimace which made his face look even more wicked.

"If Baron de Nucingen sent to tell you that he was ill and to ask you to visit him, would you reply, 'Tell him to come to me?'"

"I should go to him," said the Jew drily, as he spat into a Dutch spittoon of mahogany filled with sand.

"You would go to him," Godefroid said mildly, "because the baron has two millions a year, and——"

"Nothing else has to do with the matter. I should go."

"Very well, monsieur, you may come and see the lady on

the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse for the same reason. Though I have not such a fortune as the Baron de Nucingen, I am here to tell you that you can name your own price for the cure, or, if you fail, for your care of her. I am prepared to pay you in advance. But how is it, monsieur, that you, a Polish exile, a communist, I believe, will make no sacrifice for the sake of Poland! For this lady is the granddaughter of General Tarlovski, Prince Poniatowski's friend——"

"Monsieur, you came to ask me to prescribe for this lady, and not to give me your advice. In Poland I am a Pole; in Paris a Parisian. Every one does good in his own way, and you may believe me when I tell you that the greed attributed to me has its good reasons. The money I accumulate has its uses; it is sacred. I sell health; rich persons can pay for it, and I make them buy it. The poor have their physicians. If I had no aim in view, I should not practice medicine. I live soberly, and I spend my time in rushing from one to another; I am by nature lazy, and I used to be a gambler. You may draw your own conclusions, young man! You are not old enough to judge the aged!"

Godefroid kept silence.

"You live with the granddaughter of the foolhardy soldier who had no courage but for fighting, and who betrayed his country to Catherine II.?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Then be at home on Monday at three o'clock," said he, laying down his pipe and taking up his note-book, in which he wrote a few words. "When I call you will please to pay me two hundred francs; then, if I undertake to cure her, you will give me a thousand crowns. I have been told," he went on, "that the lady is shrunken as if she had fallen in the fire."

"It is a case, monsieur, if you will believe the first physicians of Paris, of nervous disease, with symptoms so strange that no one can imagine them who has not seen them."

"Ah, yes, now I remember the details given me by that little fellow. Till to-morrow, monsieur."

Godefroid left with a bow to this singular and extraordinary man. There was nothing about him to show or suggest a medical man, not even in that bare consulting-room, where the only article of furniture that was at all remarkable was the ponderous chest, made by Huret or Fichet.

Godefroid reached the Passage Vivienne in time to purchase a splendid melodeon before the store was closed, and he dispatched it forthwith to Monsieur Bernard, whose address he gave.

Then he went to the Rue Chanoinesse, passing along the Quai des Augustins, where he hoped still to find a bookseller's store open; he was, in fact, so fortunate, and had a long conversation on the prime cost of law-books, with the young clerk in charge.

He found Madame de la Chanterie and her friends just come in from high mass, and he answered her first inquiring glance with a significant shake.

"And our dear Father Alain is not with you?" said he.

"He will not be here this Sunday," replied Madame de la Chanterie. "You will not find him here till this day week, unless you go to the place where you know you can meet him."

"Madame," said Godefroid, in an undertone, "you know I am less afraid of him than of these gentlemen, and I intended to confess to him."

"And I?"

"Oh, you—I will tell you everything, for I have many things to say to you. As a beginning, I have come upon the most extraordinary case of destitution, the strangest union of poverty and luxury, and figures of a sublimity which outdoes the inventions of our most admired romancers."

"Nature, and especially moral nature, is always as far above art as God is above His creatures. But come," said Madame

de la Chanterie, "and tell me all about your expedition into the unknown lands where you made your first venture."

Monsieur Nicolas and Monsieur Joseph—for the Abbé de Vèze had remained for a few minutes at Notre-Dame—left Madame de la Chanterie alone with Godefroid; and he, fresh from the emotions he had gone through the day before, related every detail with the intensity, the gesticulation, and the eagerness that come of the first impression produced by such a scene and its accessories of men and things. He had a success too; for Madame de la Chanterie, calm and gentle as she was, and accustomed to look into gulfs of suffering, shed tears.

"You did right," said she, "to send the melodeon."

"I wish I could have done much more," replied Godefroid, "since this is the first family through whom I have known the pleasures of charity; I want to secure to this noble old man the chief part of the profits on his great work. I do not know whether you have enough confidence in me to enable me to undertake such a business. From the information I have gained, it would cost about nine thousand francs to bring out an edition of fifteen hundred copies, and their lowest selling value would be twenty-four thousand francs. As we must, in the first instance, pay off the three thousand and odd francs that have been advanced on the manuscript, we should have to risk twelve thousand francs.

"Oh, madame! if you could but imagine how bitterly, as I made my way hither from the Quai des Augustins, I rued having so foolishly wasted my little fortune. The Genius of Charity appeared to me, as it were, and filled me with the ardor of a neophyte; I desire to renounce the world, to live the life of these gentlemen, and to be worthy of you. Many a time during the past two days have I blessed the chance that brought me to your house. I will obey you in every particular till you judge me worthy to join the brotherhood."

"Well," said Madame de la Chanterie very seriously, after

a few minutes of reflection, "listen to me, I have important things to say to you. You have been fascinated, my dear boy, by the poetry of misfortune. Yes, misfortune often has a poetry of its own; for, to me, poetry is a certain exaltation of feeling, and suffering is feeling. We live so much through suffering!"

"Yes, madame, I was captured by the demon of curiosity. How could I help it! I have not yet acquired the habit of seeing into the heart of these unfortunate lives, and I cannot set out with the calm resolution of your three pious soldiers of the Lord. But I may tell you, it was not till I had quelled this incitement that I devoted myself to your work."

"Listen, my very dear son," said Madame de la Chanterie, saying the words with a saintly sweetness which deeply touched Godefroid, "we have forbidden ourselves absolutely—and this is no exaggeration, for we do not allow ourselves even to think of what is forbidden—we have forbidden ourselves ever to embark in a speculation. To print a book for sale, and looking for a return, is business, and any transaction of that kind would involve us in the difficulties of trade. To be sure, it looks in this case very feasible, and even necessary. Do you suppose that it is the first instance of the kind that has come before us? Twenty times, a hundred times, we have seen how a family, a concern, could be saved. But, then, what should we have become in undertaking matters of this kind? We should be simply a trading firm. To be a sleeping partner with the unfortunate is not work; it is only helping misfortune to work. In a few days you may meet with even harder cases than this; will you do the same thing? You would be overwhelmed.

"Remember, for one thing, that the house of Mongenod, for a year past, has ceased to keep our accounts. Quite half of your time will be taken up by keeping our books. There are, at this time, nearly two thousand persons in our debt in Paris; and of those who may repay us, at any rate, it is neces-

sary that we should check the amounts they owe us. We never sue—we wait. We calculate that half of the money given out is utterly lost. The other half sometimes returns doubled.

"Now, suppose this lawyer were to die, the twelve thousand francs would be badly invested! But if his daughter recovers, if his grandson does well, if he one day gets another appointment—then, if he has any sense of honor, he will remember the debt, and return the funds of the poor with interest. Do you know that more than one family, raised from poverty and started by us on the road to fortune by considerable loans without interest, has saved for the poor and returned us sums of double and, sometimes, treble the amount?

"This is our only form of speculation.

"In the first place, as to this case which interests you, and ought to interest you, consider that the sale of the lawyer's book depends on its merits; have you read it? Then, even if the work is excellent, how many excellent books have remained two or three years without achieving the success they deserved. How many a wreath is laid on a tomb! And, as I know, publishers have ways of driving bargains and taking their charges, which make the business one of the most risky and the most difficult to disentangle of all in Paris. Monsieur Nicolas can tell you about these difficulties, inherent in the nature of book-making. So, you see, we are prudent; we have ample experience of every kind of misery, as of every branch of trade, for we have been long studying Paris. The Mongenods give us much help; they are a light to our path, and through them we know that the Bank of France is always suspicious of the book-trade, though it is a noble trade—but it is badly conducted.

"As to the four thousand francs needed to save this noble family from the horrors of indigence, I will give you the money; for the poor boy and his grandfather must be fed

and decently dressed. There are sorrows, miseries, wounds, which we bind up at once without inquiring whom it is that we are helping; religion, honor, character, are not inquired into; but as soon as it is a case of lending the money belonging to the poor to assist the unfortunate under the more active form of industry or trade, then we require some guarantee, and are as rigid as the money-lenders. So, for all beyond this immediate relief, be satisfied with finding the most honest publisher for the old man's book. This is a matter for Monsieur Nicolas. He is acquainted with lawyers and professors and authors of works on jurisprudence; next Saturday he will, no doubt, be prepared with some good advice for you.

"Be easy; the difficulty will be surmounted if possible. At the same time, it might be well if Monsieur Nocolas could read the magistrate's book; if you can persuade him to lend it."

Godefroid was amazed at this woman's sound sense, for he had believed her to be animated solely by the spirit of charity. He knelt on one knee and kissed one of her beautiful hands, saying—

"Then you are Reason, too!"

"In our work we have to be everything," said she, with the peculiar cheerfulness of a true saint.

There was a brief silence, broken by Godefroid, who exclaimed—

"Two thousand debtors, did you say, madame? Two thousand accounts! It is tremendous!"

"Two thousand accounts, which may lead, as I have told you, to our being repaid from the delicate honor of the borrowers. But there are three thousand more—families who will never make us any return but in thanks. Thus, as I have told you, we feel that it is necessary to keep books; and if your secrecy is above suspicion, you will be our financial oracle. We ought to keep a day-book, a ledger, a book of current expenses, and a cash-book. Of course, we have re-

ceipts, notes of hand, but it takes a great deal of time to look for them—— Here come the gentlemen."

Godefroid, at first serious and thoughtful, took little part in the conversation; he was bewildered by the revelation Madame de la Chanterie had just imparted to him in a way which showed that she meant it to be the reward of his zeal.

"Two thousand families indebted to us!" said he to himself. "Why, if they all cost as much as Monsieur Bernard will cost us, we must have millions sown broadcast in Paris!"

This reflection was one of the last promptings of the worldly spirit which was fast dying out in Godefroid. As he thought the matter over, he understood that the united fortunes of Madame de la Chanterie, of Messieurs Alain, Nicolas, Joseph, and Judge Popinot, with the gifts collected by the Abbé de Vèze, and the loans from the Mongenods, must have produced a considerable capital; also, that in twelve or fifteen years this capital, with the interest paid on it by those who had shown their gratitude, must have increased like a snowball, since the charitable holders took nothing from it. By degrees he began to see clearly how the immense affair was managed, and his wish to coöperate was increased.

At nine o'clock he was about to return on foot to the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse; but Madame de la Chanterie, distrustful of so lonely a neighborhood, insisted on his taking a cab. As he got out of the vehicle, though the shutters were so closely fastened that not a gleam of light was visible, Godefroid heard the sound of the instrument; and Auguste, who, no doubt, was watching for Godefroid's return, half opened the door on the landing, and said—

"Mamma would very much like to see you, and my grandfather begs you will take a cup of tea."

Godefroid went in and found the invalid transfigured by the pleasure of the music; her face beamed and her eyes sparkled like diamonds.

"I ought to have waited for you, to let you hear the first chords; but I flew at this little organ as a hungry man rushes on a banquet. But you have a soul to understand me, and I know I am forgiven."

Vanda made a sign to her son, who placed himself where he could press the pedal that supplied the interior of the instrument with wind; and, with her eyes raised to heaven like Saint Cecilia, the invalid, whose hands had for a time recovered their strength and agility, performed some variations on the prayer in "Mosè"* which her son had bought for her. She had composed them in a few hours. Godefroid discerned in her a talent identical with that of Chopin. It was a soul manifesting itself by divine sounds in which sweet melancholy predominated.

Monsieur Bernard greeted Godefroid with a look expressing a sentiment long since in abeyance. If the tears had not been for ever dried up in the old man scorched by so many fierce sorrows, his eyes would at this moment have been wet.

The old lawyer was fingering his snuff-box and gazing at his daughter with unutterable rapture.

"To-morrow, madame," said Godefroid, when the music had ceased, "your fate will be sealed, for I have good news for you. The famous Halpersohn will come at three o'clock. And he has promised," he added in Monsieur Bernard's ear, "to tell me the truth."

The old man rose, and taking Godefroid by the hand, led him into a corner of the room near the fireplace. He was trembling.

"What a night lies before me! It is the final sentence!" said he in a whisper. "My daughter will be cured or condemned!"

"Take courage," said Godefroid, "and after tea come to my rooms!"

"Cease playing, my child," said Monsieur Bernard; "you

* Anglice: "Moses in Egypt."

will bring on an attack. Such an expenditure of strength will be followed by a reaction."

He made Auguste remove the instrument, and brought his daughter her cup of tea with the coaxing ways of a nurse who wants to anticipate the impatience of a baby.

"And what is this doctor like?" asked she, already diverted by the prospect of seeing a stranger.

Vanda, like all prisoners, was consumed by curiosity. When the physical symptoms of her complaint gave her some respite, they seemed to develop in her mind, and then she had the strangest whims and violent caprices. She wanted to see Rossini, and cried because her father, who could, she imagined, do everything, assured her he could not bring him.

Godefroid gave her a minute description of the Jewish physician and his consulting-room, for she knew nothing of the steps taken by her father. Monsieur Bernard had enjoined silence on his grandson as to his visits to Halpersohn; he had so much feared to excite hopes which might not be realized. Vanda seemed to hang on the words that fell from Godefroid's lips; she was spellbound and almost crazy, so ardent did her desire become to see the strange Pole.

"Poland has produced many singular and mysterious figures," said the old lawyer. "Just now, for instance, beside this doctor there is Hoëné Vronski, the mathematician and seer, Mickievicz, the poet, the inspired Tovianski, and Chopin with his superhuman talent. Great national agitations always produce these crippled giants."

"Oh, my dear papa, what a man you are! If you were to write down all that we hear you say simply to entertain me, you would make a fortune! For, would you believe me, monsieur, my kind old father invents tales for me when I have no more novels to read, and so sends me to sleep. His voice lulls me, and he often soothes my pain with his cleverness. Who will ever repay him? Auguste, my dear boy, you ought to kiss your grandfather's footprints for me."

The youth looked at his mother with his fine eyes full of tears; and that look, overflowing with long-repressed compassion, was a poem in itself. Godefroid rose, took Auguste's hand, and pressed it warmly.

"God has given you two angels for your companions, madame!" he exclaimed.

"Indeed I know it. And I blame myself for so often provoking them. Come, dear Auguste, and kiss your mother. He is a son, monsieur, of whom any mother would be proud. He is as good as gold, candid—a soul without sin; but a rather too impassioned creature, like his mamma. God has nailed me to my bed to preserve me, perhaps, from the follies women commit—when they have too much heart!" she ended with a smile.

Godefroid smiled in reply and bowed good-night.

"Good-night, monsieur; and be sure to thank your friend, for he has made a poor cripple very happy."

"Monsieur," said Godefroid when he was in his rooms, alone with Monsieur Bernard, who had followed him, "I think I may promise you that you shall not be robbed by those three sharpers. I can get the required sum, but you must place the papers proving the loan in my hands. If I am to do anything more, you should allow me to have your book—not to read myself, for I am not learned enough to judge of it, but to be read by an old lawyer I know, a man of unimpeachable integrity, who will undertake, according to the character of the work, to find a respectable firm with whom you may deal on equitable terms. On this, however, I do not insist.

"Meanwhile, here are five hundred francs," he went on, offering a note to the astonished lawyer, "to supply your more pressing wants. I ask for no receipt; you will be indebted on no evidence but that of your conscience, and your conscience may lie silent till you have to some extent recovered yourself. I will settle with Halpersohn."

"But who are you?" asked the old man, sinking on to a chair.

"I," replied Godefroid, "am nobody; but I serve certain powerful persons to whom your necessities are now made known, and who take an interest in you. Ask no more."

"And what motive can these persons have——?"

"Religion, monsieur," replied Godefroid.

"Is it possible? Religion!"

"Yes, the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman religion."

"Then you are of the Order of Jesus?"

"No, monsieur," said Godefroid. "Be perfectly easy. No one has any design on you beyond that of helping you and restoring your family to comfort."

"Can philanthropy then wear any guise but that of vanity?"

"Nay, monsieur, do not insult holy Catholic Love, the virtue described by Saint Paul!" cried Godefroid eagerly.

At this reply Monsieur Bernard began to stride up and down the room.

"I accept!" he suddenly said. "And I have but one way of showing my gratitude—that is, by intrusting you with my work. The notes and quotations are unnecessary to a lawyer; and I have, as I told you, two months' work before me yet in copying them out. To-morrow, then," and he shook hands with Godefroid.

"Can I have effected a conversion?" thought Godefroid, struck by the new expression he saw on the old man's face as he had last spoken.

Next day, at three o'clock, a hackney coach stopped at the door, and out of it stepped Halpersohn, buried in a vast bear-skin coat. The cold had increased in the course of the night, and the thermometer stood at ten degrees below freezing.

The Jewish doctor narrowly though furtively examined the room in which his visitor of yesterday received him, and Godefroid detected a gleam of suspicion sparkling in his eye

like the point of a dagger. This swift flash of doubt gave Godefroid an internal chill; he began to think that this man would be merciless in his money dealings; and it is so natural to think of genius as allied to goodness, that this gave him an impulse of disgust.

"Monsieur," said he, "I perceive that the plainness of my lodgings arouses your uneasiness; so you will not be surprised at my manner of proceeding. Here are your two hundred francs, and here, you see, are three notes for a thousand francs each"—and he drew out the notes which Madame de la Chanterie had given him to redeem Monsieur Bernard's manuscript. "If you have any further doubts as to my solvency, I may refer you, as a guarantee for the carrying out of my pledge, to Messrs. Mongenod, the bankers, Rue de la Victoire."

"I know them," said Halpersohn, slipping the ten gold-pieces into his pocket.

"And he will go there!" thought Godefroid.

"And where does the sick lady live?" asked the doctor, rising, as a man who knows the value of time.

"Come this way, monsieur," said Godefroid, going first to show him the way.

The Jew cast a shrewd and scrutinizing glance on the rooms he went through, for he had the eye of a spy; and he was able to see the misery of poverty through the door into Monsieur Bernard's bedroom, for, unluckily, Monsieur Bernard had just been putting on the dress in which he always showed himself to his daughter, and in his haste to admit his visitors he left the door of his kennel ajar.

He bowed with dignity to Halpersohn, and softly opened his daughter's bedroom door.

"Vanda, my dear, here is the doctor," he said.

He stood aside to let Halpersohn pass, still wrapped in his furs.

The Jew was surprised at the splendor of this room, which

in this part of the town seemed anomalous; but his astonishment was of no long duration, for he had often seen in the houses of German and Polish Jews a similar discrepancy between the display of extreme penury and concealed wealth. While walking from the door to the bed he never took his eyes off the sufferer; and when he stood by her side, he said to her in Polish—

"Are you a Pole?"

"I am not; my mother was."

"Whom did your grandfather, General Tarlovski, marry?"

"A Pole."

"Of what province?"

"A Sobolevska of Pinsk."

"Good. And this gentleman is your father?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Monsieur," said Halpersohn, "is your wife——"

"She is dead," replied Monsieur Bernard.

"Was she excessively fair?" said Halpersohn, with some impatience at the interruption.

"Here is a portrait of her," replied Monsieur Bernard, taking down a handsome frame containing several good miniatures.

Halpersohn was feeling the invalid's head and hair, while he looked at the portrait of Vanda Tarlovski *née* Comtesse Sobolevska.

"Tell me the symptoms of the patient's illness." And he seated himself in the armchair, gazing steadily at Vanda during twenty minutes, while the father and daughter spoke by turns.

"And how old is the lady?"

"Eight-and-thirty."

"Very good!" he said as he rose. "Well, I undertake to cure her. I cannot promise to give her the use of her legs, but she can be cured. Only, she must be placed in a private hospital in my part of the town."

"But, monsieur, my daughter cannot be moved——"

"I will answer for her life," said Halpersohn sententiously. "But I answer for her only on those conditions. Do you know she will exchange her present symptoms for another horrible form of disease, which will last for a year perhaps, or six months at the very least? You can come to see her, as you are her father."

"And it is certain?" asked Monsieur Bernard.

"Certain," repeated the Jew. "You daughter has a vicious humor, a national disorder, in her blood, and it must be brought out. When you bring her, carry her to the Rue Basse-Saint-Pierre at Chaillot—Dr. Halpersohn's private hospital."

"But how?"

"On a stretcher, as the sick people are always carried to a hospital."

"But it will kill her to be moved."

"No."

And Halpersohn, as he spoke this curt *No*, was at the door, where Godefroid met him on the landing.

The Jew, who was suffocating with heat, said in his ear—

"The charge will be fifteen francs a day, beside the thousand crowns; three months paid in advance."

"Very good, monsieur. And," asked Godefroid, standing on the step of the cab into which the doctor had hurried, "you answer for the cure?"

"Positively," said the Pole. "Are you in love with the lady?"

"No," said Godefroid.

"You must not repeat what I am about to tell you, for I am saying it only to prove to you that I am sure of the cure; but if you say anything about it, you will be the death of the woman——"

Godefroid replied only by a gesture.

"For seventeen years she has been suffering from the disease

known as *Plica Polonica*, which can produce all these torments; I have seen the most dreadful cases. Now, I am the only man living who knows how to bring out the *plicæ* in such a form as to be curable, for not every one gets over it. You see, monsieur, that I am really very liberal. If this were some great lady—a Baronne de Nucingen or any other wife or daughter of some modern Crœsus—I should get a hundred—two hundred thousand francs for this cure—whatever I might like to ask! However, that is a minor misfortune."

"And moving her?"

"Oh, she will seem to be dying, but she will not die of it! She may live a hundred years when once she is cured. Now, Jacques, quick—Rue Monsieur, and make haste!" said he to the driver.

He left Godefroid standing in the street, where he gazed in bewilderment after the retreating cab.

"Who on earth is that queer-looking man dressed in bear-skin?" asked Madame Vauthier, whom nothing could escape. "Is it true, as the hackney coachman said, that he is the most famous doctor in Paris?"

"And what can that matter to you, Mother Vauthier?" he asked.

"Oh, not at all," said she with a sour face.

"You made a great mistake in not siding with me," said Godefroid, as he slowly went into the house. "You would have done better than by sticking to Monsieur Barbet and Monsieur Métivier; you will get nothing out of them."

"And am I on their side?" retorted she with a shrug. "Monsieur Barbet is my landlord, that is all."

It took two days to persuade Monsieur Bernard to part from his daughter and carry her to Chaillot. Godefroid and the old lawyer walked all the way, one on each side of the stretcher, screened in with striped blue-and-white ticking, on which the precious patient lay, almost tied down to the mattress, so greatly did her father fear the convulsions of a nervous attack.

However, having set out at three o'clock, the procession reached the private hospital at five, when it was dusk. Godefroid paid the four hundred and fifty francs demanded for the three months' board, and took a receipt for it; then, when he went down to pay the two porters, Monsieur Bernard joined him and took from under the mattress a very voluminous sealed packet, which he handed to Godefroid.

"One of these men will fetch you a cab," said he, "for you cannot carry those four volumes very far. This is my book; place it in my censor's hands; I will leave it with him for a week. I shall remain at least a week in this neighborhood, for I cannot abandon my daughter to her fate. I know my grandson; he can mind the house, especially with you to help him; and I commend him to your care. If I were myself what once I was, I would ask you my critic's name; for if he was once a magistrate, there were few whom I did not know——"

"It is no mystery," said Godefroid, interrupting Monsieur Bernard. "Since you show such entire confidence in me, I may tell you that the reader is the President Lecamus de Tresnes."

"Oh, of the Supreme Court in Paris. Take it—by all means. He is one of the noblest men of our time. He and the late Judge Popinot, the judge of the lower court, were lawyers worthy of the best days of the old Parlements. All my fears, if I had any, must vanish. And where does he live? I should like to go and thank him when he has taken so much trouble."

"You will find him in the Rue Chanoinesse, under the name of Monsieur Nicolas. I am just going there. But your agreement with those rascals?"

"Auguste will give it you," said the old man, going back into the hospital.

A cab was found on the Quai de Billy and brought by one of the men; Godefroid got in and stimulated the driver by

the promise of drink money if he drove quickly to the Rue Chanoinesse, where he intended to dine.

Half an hour after Vanda's removal, three men, dressed in black, were let in by Madame Vauthier at the door in the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, where they had been waiting, no doubt, till the coast should be clear. They went upstairs under the guidance of the Judas in petticoats, and gently knocked at Monsieur Bernard's door. As it happened to be a Thursday, the young collegian was at home. He opened the door, and three men slipped like shadows into the outer room.

"What do you want, gentlemen?" asked the youth.

"This is Monsieur Bernard's—that is to say, Monsieur le Baron——?"

"But what do you want here?"

"Oh, you know that pretty well, young man, for your grandfather has just gone off with a closed litter, I am told. Well, that does not surprise us; he shows his wisdom. I am a bailiff, and I have come to seize everything here. On Monday last you were summoned to pay three thousand francs and the expenses to Monsieur Métivier, under penalty of imprisonment; and as a man who has grown onions knows the smell of chives, the debtor has taken the key of the fields rather than wait for that of the lock-up. However, if we cannot secure him, we can get a wing or a leg of his gorgeous furniture—for we know all about it, young man, and we are going to make an official report."

"Here are some stamped papers that your grandpapa would never take," said the widow Vauthier, shoving three writs into Auguste's hand.

"Stay here, ma'am; we will put you in possession. The law gives you forty sous a day; it is not to be sneezed at."

"Ah, ha! Then I shall see what there is in the grand bedroom!" cried Madame Vauthier.

"You shall not go into my mother's room!" cried the lad in a fury, as he flung himself between the door and the three men in black.

On a sign from their leader, the two men and a lawyer's clerk who came in seized Auguste.

"No resistance, young man; you are not master here. We shall draw up a charge, and you will spend the night in the lock-up."

At this dreadful threat, Auguste melted into tears.

"Oh, what a mercy," cried he, "that mamma is gone! This would have killed her!"

The men and the bailiff now held a sort of council with the widow Vauthier. Auguste understood, though they talked in a low voice, that what they chiefly wanted was to seize his grandfather's precious manuscripts, so he opened the bedroom door.

"Walk in then, gentlemen," said he, "but spoil nothing. You will be paid to-morrow morning." Then, still in tears, he went into his own squalid room, snatched up all his grandfather's notes, and stuffed them into the stove, where he knew that there was not a spark of fire.

The thing was done so promptly that the bailiff, though he was keen and cunning, and worthy of his employers Barbet and Métivier, found the boy in tears on a chair when he rushed into the room, having concluded that the manuscripts would not be in the anteroom. Though books and manuscripts may not legally be seized for debt, the lien signed by the old lawyer in this case justified the proceeding. Still, it would have been easy to find means of delaying the distraint, as Monsieur Bernard would certainly have known. Hence the necessity for acting with cunning.

The widow Vauthier had been an invaluable ally to her landlord by failing to serve his notices on her lodger; her plan was to throw them on him when entering at the heels of the officers of justice; or, if necessary, to declare to Monsieur

Bernard that she had supposed them to be intended for the two writers who had been absent for two days.

The inventory of the goods took above an hour to make out, for the bailiff would omit nothing, and regarded the value as sufficient to pay off the debts.

As soon as the officers were gone, the poor youth took the writs and hurried away to find his grandfather at Halpersohn's hospital; for, as the bailiff assured him that Madame Vauthier was responsible for everything under heavy penalties, he could leave the place without fear.

The idea of his grandfather being taken to prison for debt drove the poor boy absolutely mad—mad in the way in which the young are mad; that is to say, a victim to the dangerous and fatal excitement in which every energy of youth is in a ferment and may lead to the worst as to the most heroic actions.

When poor Auguste reached the Rue Basse-Saint-Pierre, the doorkeeper told him that he did not know what had become of the father of the patient brought in at five o'clock, but that by Monsieur Halpersohn's orders no one—not even her father—was to be allowed to see the lady for a week, or it might endanger her life.

This reply put a climax to Auguste's desperation. He went back again to the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, revolving the most extravagant schemes as he went. He got home by about half-past eight, almost starving, so exhausted by hunger and grief, that he accepted when Madame Vauthier invited him to share her supper, consisting of a stew of mutton and potatoes. The poor boy dropped half-dead into a chair in the dreadful woman's room.

Encouraged by the old woman's coaxing and insinuating words, he answered a few cunningly arranged questions about Godefroid, and gave her to understand that it was he who would pay off his grandfather's debts on the morrow, and that to him they owed the improvement that had taken place in their

prospects during the past week. The widow listened to all this with an affectation of doubt, plying Auguste with a few glasses of wine.

At ten o'clock the wheels of a cab were heard to stop in front of the house, and the woman exclaimed—

"Oh, there is Monsieur Godefroid!"

Auguste took the key of his rooms and went upstairs to see the kind friend of the family; but he found Godefroid so entirely unlike himself, that he hesitated to speak till the thought of his grandfather's danger spurred the generous youth.

This is what had happened in the Rue Chanoinesse, and had caused Godefroid's stern expression of countenance.

The neophyte, arriving in good time, had found Madame de la Chanterie and her adherents in the drawing-room, and he had taken Monsieur Nicolas aside to deliver to him the "Spirit of the Modern Laws." Monsieur Nicolas at once carried the sealed parcel to his room, and came down to dinner. Then, after chatting during the first part of the evening, he went up again, intending to begin reading the work.

Godefroid was greatly surprised when, a few minutes after, Manon came from the old judge to beg him to go up to speak with him. Following Manon, he was led to Monsieur Nicolas' room; but he could pay no attention to its details, so greatly was he startled by the evident distress of a man usually so placid and firm.

"Did you know," said Monsieur Nicolas, quite the judge again, "the name of the author of this work?"

"Monsieur Bernard," said Godefroid. "I know him only by that name. I did not open the parcel——"

"True," said Monsieur Nicolas. "I broke the seals myself. And you made no inquiry as to his previous history?"

"No. I know that he married for love the daughter of General Tarlovski, that his daughter is named Vanda after her mother, and his grandson Auguste. And the portrait I saw of Monsieur Bernard is, I believe, in the dress of a presiding judge—a red gown."

"Look here!" said Monsieur Nicolas, and held out the title of the work in Auguste's handwriting, and in the following form:

THE SPIRIT

OF THE MODERN LAWS

BY

M. BERNARD-JEAN-BAPTISTE MACLOUD

BARON BOURLAC

Formerly Attorney-General to the High Court of Justice at Rouen
Commander of the Legion of Honor.

"Oh! The man who condemned madame, her daughter, and the Chevalier du Vissard!" said Godefroid in a choked voice.

His knees gave way, and the neophyte dropped on to a chair.

"What a beginning!" he murmured.

"This, my dear Godefroid, is a business that comes home to us all. You have done your part; we must deal with it now! I beg you to do nothing further of any kind; go and fetch whatever you left in your rooms; and not a word! In fact, absolute silence. Tell Baron Bourlac to apply to me. Between this and then, we shall have decided how it will be best to act in such circumstances."

Godefroid went downstairs, called a hackney cab, and hurried back to the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, filled with horror as he thought of the examination and trials of Caen, of

the hideous drama that ended on the scaffold, and of Madame de la Chanterie's sojourn in Bicêtre. He understood the neglect into which this lawyer, almost a second Fouquier-Tinville, had fallen in his old age, and the reasons why he so carefully concealed his name.

"I hope Monsieur Nicolas will take some terrible revenge for poor Madame de la Chanterie!"

He had just thought out this not very Christian wish, when he saw Auguste.

"What do you want of me?" asked Godefroid.

"My dear sir, a misfortune has befallen us which is turning my brain! Some scoundrels have been here to take possession of everything belonging to my mother, and they are hunting for my grandfather to put him into prison. But it is not by reason of these disasters that I turn to you for help," said the lad with Roman pride; "it is to beg you to do me such a service as you, any one, would do to a condemned criminal——"

"Speak," said Godefroid.

"They wanted to get hold of my grandfather's manuscripts; and as I believe he placed the work in your hands, I want to beg you to take the notes, for the woman will not allow me to remove a thing. Put them with the volumes, and then——"

"Very well," said Godefroid, "make haste and fetch them."

While the lad went off, to return immediately, Godefroid reflected that the poor boy was guilty of no crime, that he must not break his heart by telling him about his grandfather, or the desertion which was the punishment in his sad old age of the passions of his political career; he took the packet not unkindly.

"What is your mother's name?" he asked.

"My mother, monsieur, is the Baronne de Mergi. My father was the son of the presiding judge of the Supreme Court at Rouen."

"Ah!" said Godefroid, "so your grandfather married his daughter to the son of the famous Judge Mergi?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Leave me, my little friend," said Godefroid.

He went out on to the landing with the young Baron de Mergi, and called Madame Vauthier.

"Mother Vauthier," said he, "you can relet my rooms; I am never coming back again."

And he went down to the cab.

"Have you intrusted anything to that gentleman?" asked the widow of Auguste.

"Yes," said the lad.

"You're a pretty fool. He is one of your enemies' agents. He has been at the bottom of it all, you may be sure. It is proof enough that the trick has turned out all right that he never means to come back. He told me I could let his rooms."

Auguste flew out, and down the boulevard, running after the cab, and at last succeeded in stopping it by his shouts and cries.

"What is it?" asked Godefroid.

"My grandfather's manuscripts!"

"Tell him to apply for them to Monsieur Nicolas."

The lad took this reply as the cruel jest of a thief who has no shame left; he sat down in the snow as he saw the cab set off again at a brisk trot.

He rose in a fever of fierce energy and went home to bed, worn out with rushing about Paris, and quite heart-broken.

Next morning, Auguste de Mergi awoke to find himself alone in the rooms where yesterday his mother and his grandfather had been with him, and he went through all the miseries of his position, of which he fully understood the extent. The utter desertion of the place, hitherto so amply filled, where every minute had brought with it a duty and an occupation, was so painful to him, that he went down to ask the widow

Vauthier whether his grandfather had come in during the night or early morning; for he himself had slept very late, and he supposed that if the Baron Bourlac had come home the woman would have warned him against his pursuers. She replied, with a sneer, that he must know full well where to look for his grandfather; for if he had not come in, it was evident that he had taken up his abode in the "Château de Clichy." This impudent irony from the woman who, the day before, had cajoled him so effectually, again drove the poor boy to frenzy, and he flew to the private hospital in the Rue Basse-Saint-Pierre, in despair, as he thought of his grandfather in prison.

Baron Bourlac had hung about all night in front of the hospital which he was forbidden to enter, or close to the house of Doctor Halpersohn, whom he naturally wished to call to account for this conduct. The doctor did not get home till two in the morning. The old man, who, at half-past one, had been at the doctor's door, had just gone off to walk in the Champs-Élysées, and when he returned at half-past two the gatekeeper told him that Monsieur Halpersohn was now in bed and asleep, and was on no account to be disturbed.

Here, alone, at half-past two in the morning, the unhappy father, in utter despair, paced the quay, and under the trees loaded with frost, of the sidewalks of the Cours-la-Reine, waiting for the day.

At nine o'clock he presented himself at the doctor's, and asked him why he thus kept his daughter under lock and key.

"Monsieur," said Halpersohn, "I yesterday made myself answerable for your daughter's recovery; and at this moment I am responsible for her life, and you must understand that in such a case I must have sovereign authority. I may tell you that your daughter yesterday took a remedy which will bring out the *plicæ*, that till the disease is brought out the lady must remain invisible. I will not allow myself to lose my

patient or you to lose your daughter by exposing her to any excitement, any error of treatment; if you really insist on seeing her, I shall demand a consultation of three medical men to protect myself against any responsibility, as the patient might die."

The old man, exhausted with fatigue, had dropped on to a chair; he quickly rose, however, saying—

"Forgive me, monsieur; I have spent the night in mortal anguish, for you cannot imagine how much I love my daughter, whom I have nursed for fifteen years between life and death, and this week of waiting is torture to me."

The baron left Halpersohn's study, tottering like a drunken man, the doctor giving him his arm to the top of the stairs.

About an hour later, he saw Auguste de Mergi walk into his room. On questioning the lodge-keeper of the private hospital, the poor lad had just heard that the father of the lady admitted the day before had called again in the evening, had asked for her, and had spoken of going early in the day to Doctor Halpersohn, who, no doubt, would know something about him. At the moment when Auguste de Mergi appeared in the doctor's room, Halpersohn was breakfasting off a cup of chocolate and a glass of water, all on a small round table; he did not disturb himself for the youth, but went on soaking his strip of bread in the chocolate; for he ate nothing but a roll, cut into four with an accuracy that argued some skill as an operator. Halpersohn had, in fact, practiced surgery in the course of his travels.

"Well, young man," said he as Vanda's son came in, "you, too, have come to require me to account for your mother?"

"Yes, monsieur," said Auguste.

The young fellow had come forward as far as the large table, and his eye was immediately caught by several bank-notes lying among the little piles of gold-pieces. In the position in which the unhappy boy found himself, the temptation was stronger

than his principles, well grounded as they were. He saw before him the means of rescuing his grandfather, and saving the fruits of twenty years' labor imperiled by avaricious speculators. He fell. The fascination was as swift as thought, and justified itself by an idea of self-immolation that smiled on the boy. He said to himself—

"I shall be done for, but I shall save my mother and my grandfather."

Under this stress of antagonism between his reason and the impulse to crime, he acquired, as madmen do, a strange and fleeting dexterity, and instead of asking after his grandfather, he listened and agreed to all the doctor was saying.

Halpersohn, like all acute observers, had understood the whole past history of the father, the daughter, and her son. He had scented or guessed the facts which Madame de Mergi's conversation had confirmed, and he felt in consequence a sort of benevolence toward his new clients; as to respect or admiration, he was incapable of them.

"Well, my dear boy," said he familiarly, "I am keeping your mother to restore her to you young, handsome, and in good health. Hers is one of those rare diseases which doctors find very interesting; and, beside, she is, through her mother, a fellow-countrywoman of mine. You and your grandfather must be brave enough to live without seeing her for a fortnight, and Madame——"

"La Baronne de Mergi."

"If she is a baroness, you are Baron——" asked Halpersohn.

At this moment the theft was effected. While the doctor was looking at his bread, heavy with chocolate, Auguste snatched up four folded notes, and had slipped them into his trousers pocket, affecting to keep his hand there out of sheer embarrassment.

"Yes, monsieur, I am a baron. So, too, is my grandfather; he was public prosecutor at the time of the Restoration."

"You blush, young man. You need not blush because you are a baron and poor—it is a very common case."

"And who told you, monsieur, that we are poor?"

"Well, your grandfather told me that he had spent the night in the Champs-Élysées; and though I know no palace where there is so fine a vault overhead as that which was glittering at two o'clock this morning, it was cold, I can tell you, in the palace where your grandfather was taking his airing. A man does not sleep in the Hôtel *de la Belle-Étoile* (open air) by preference."

"Has my grandfather been here?" cried Auguste, seizing the opportunity to beat a retreat. "Thank you, monsieur. I will come again, with your permission, of course, for news of my mother."

As soon as he got out, the young baron went off to the bailiff's office, taking a hackney cab to get there the sooner. The man gave up the agreement, and the bill of costs duly receipted, and then desired the young man to take one of the clerks with him to release the person in charge from her functions.

"And as Messrs. Barbet and Métivier live in your part of the town," added he, "my boy will take them the money and desire them to restore you the deed of lien on the property."

Auguste, who understood nothing of these phrases and formalities, submitted. He received seven hundred francs in silver, the change out of his four thousand-franc notes, and went off in the clerk's company. He got into the cab in a state of indescribable bewilderment, for, the end being achieved, remorse was making itself felt; he saw himself disgraced and cursed by his grandfather, whose austerity was well known to him; and he believed that his mother would die of grief if she heard of his guilt. All nature had changed before his eyes. He was lost; he no longer saw the snow, the houses looked like ghosts.

No sooner was he at home than the young baron decided on his course of action, and it was certainly that of an honest man. He went into his mother's room and took the diamond snuff-box given to his grandfather by the Emperor to send it with the seven hundred francs to Doctor Halpersohn with the following letter, which required several rough copies:

"MONSIEUR:—The fruits of twenty years' labor—my grandfather's work—were about to be absorbed by some money-lenders, who threatened him with imprisonment. Three thousand three hundred francs were enough to save him; and seeing so much gold on your table, I could not resist the idea of seeing my grandparent free by thus making good to him the earnings of his long toil. I borrowed from you, without your leave, four thousand francs; but as only three thousand three hundred francs were needed, I send you the remaining seven hundred, and with them a snuff-box set with diamonds, given by the Emperor to my grandfather; this will, I hope, indemnify you.

"If you should not after this believe that I, who shall all my life regard you as my benefactor, am a man of honor, if you will at any rate preserve silence as to an action so unjustifiable in any other circumstances, you will have saved my grandfather as you will save my mother, and I shall be for life your devoted slave.

"AUGUSTE DE MERGI."

At about half-past two, Auguste, who had walked to the Champs-Élysées, sent a messenger on to deliver at Doctor Halpersohn's door a sealed box containing ten louis, a five-hundred-franc note, and the snuff-box; then he slowly went home across the Pont d'Iéna by the Invalides and the boulevards, trusting to Doctor Halpersohn's generosity.

The physician, who had at once discovered the theft, had meanwhile changed his views as to his clients. He supposed

that the old man had come to rob him, and, not having succeeded, had sent this boy. He put no credence in the rank and titles they had assumed, and went off at once to the public prosecutor's office to state his case, and desire that immediate steps should be taken for the prosecution.

The prudence of the law rarely allows of such rapid proceedings as the complaining parties would wish; but, at about three in the afternoon, a police officer, followed by some detectives, who affected to be lounging on the boulevard, was catechising Madame Vauthier as to her lodgers, and the widow quite unconsciously was confirming the constable's suspicions.

Népomucène, scenting the policeman, thought that it was the old man they wanted; and as he was very fond of Monsieur Auguste, he hurried out to meet Monsieur Bernard, whom he intercepted in the Avenue de l'Observatoire.

"Make your escape, monsieur," cried he. "They have come to take you. The bailiffs were in yesterday and laid hands on everything. Mother Vauthier, who had hidden some stamped papers of yours, said you would be in Clichy by last night or this morning. There, do you see those sneaks?"

The old judge recognized the men as bailiffs, and he understood everything.

"And Monsieur Godefroid?" he asked.

"Gone, never to come back. Mother Vauthier says he was a spy for your enemies."

Monsieur Bourlac determined that he would go at once to Barbet, and in a quarter of an hour he was there; the old bookseller lived in the Rue Sainte-Catherine-d'Enfer.

"Oh, you have come yourself to fetch your agreement," said the publisher, bowing to his victim. "Here it is," and, to the baron's great amazement, he handed him the document, which the old lawyer took, saying—

"I do not understand——"

"Then it was not you who paid up?" said Barbet.

"Are you paid?"

"Your grandson carried the money to the bailiff this morning."

"And is it true that you took possession of my goods yesterday?"

"Have you not been home for two days?" said Barbet. "Still, a retired public prosecutor must know what it is to be threatened with imprisonment for debt!"

On this the baron bowed coldly to Barbet, and returned home, supposing that the authorities had in fact come in search of the authors living on the upper floor. He walked slowly, absorbed in vague apprehensions, for Népomucène's warning seemed to him more and more inexplicable. Could Godefroid have betrayed him? He mechanically turned down the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, and went in by the back door, which happened to be open, running against Népomucène.

"Oh, monsieur, make haste, come on; they are taking Monsieur Auguste to prison; they caught him on the boulevard; it was him they were hunting—they have been questioning him——"

The old man, with a spring like a tiger's, rushed through the house and garden and out on to the boulevard, as swift as an arrow, and was just in time to see his grandson get into a hackney coach between three men.

"Auguste," he cried, "what is the meaning of this?"

The youth burst into tears, and turned faint.

"Monsieur," said he to the police officer, whose scarf struck his eye, "I am Baron Bourlac, formerly a public prosecutor; for pity's sake, explain the matter."

"Monsieur, if you are Baron Bourlac, you will understand it in two words. I have just questioned this young man, and he has unfortunately confessed——"

"What?"

"A theft of four thousand francs from Doctor Halpersohn."

"Auguste! Is it possible?"

"Grandpapa, I have sent him your diamond snuff-box as a guarantee. I wanted to save you from the disgrace of imprisonment."

"Wretched boy, what have you done?" cried the baron. "The diamonds are false; I sold the real stones three years ago."

The police officer and his clerk looked at each other with strange meaning. This glance, full of suggestions, was seen by the baron, and fell like a thunderbolt.

"Monsieur," said he to the officer, "be quite easy; I will go and see the public prosecutor; you can testify to the delusion in which I have kept my daughter and my grandson. You must do your duty, but, in the name of humanity, send my grandson to a cell by himself. I will go to the prison. Where are you taking him?"

"Are you Baron Bourlac?" said the constable.

"Oh! Monsieur——"

"Because the public prosecutor, the examining judge, and I myself could not believe that such men as you and your grandson could be guilty; like the doctor, we concluded that some swindlers had borrowed your names."

He took the baron aside and said—

"Were you at Doctor Halpersohn's house this morning?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"And your grandson too, about half-an-hour later?"

"I know nothing about that; I have this instant come in, and I have not seen my grandson since yesterday."

"The writs he showed me and the warrants for arrest explain everything," said the police agent. "I know his motive for the crime. I ought indeed to arrest you, monsieur, as abetting your grandson, for your replies confirm the facts alleged by the complainant; but the notices served on you, and which I return to you," he added, holding out a packet

of stamped papers which he had in his hand, "certainly prove you to be Baron Bourlac. At the same time, you must be prepared to be called up before Monsieur Marest, the examining judge in this case. I believe I am right in relaxing the usual rule in consideration of your past dignity.

"As to your grandson, I will speak of him to the public prosecutor as soon as I go in, and we will show every possible consideration for the grandson of a retired judge, and the victim of a youthful error. Still, there is the indictment, the accused has confessed; I have sent in my report, and have a warrant for his imprisonment; I cannot help myself. As to the place of detention, your grandson will be taken to the Conciergerie."

"Thank you, monsieur," said the miserable Bourlac. He fell senseless on the snow, and tumbled into one of the rain-water cisterns, which at that time divided the trees on the boulevard.

The police officer called for help, and Népomucène hurried out with Madame Vauthier. The old man was carried indoors, and the woman begged the police constable, as he went by the Rue d'Enfer, to send Doctor Berton as quickly as possible.

"What is the matter with my grandfather?" asked poor Auguste.

"He is crazed, sir. That is what comes of thieving!" said the Vauthier.

Auguste made a rush as though to crack his skull; but the two men held him.

"Come, come, young man. Take it quietly," said the officer. "Be calm. You have done wrong, but it is not irremediable."

"But pray, monsieur, tell the woman that my grandfather has probably not touched a morsel of food for these twenty-four hours."

"Oh, poor creatures!" said the officer to himself.

He stopped the coach, which had started, and said a word in his clerk's ear; the man ran off to speak to old Vauthier, and then returned at once.

Monsieur Berton was of opinion that Monsieur Bernard—for he knew him by no other name—was suffering from an attack of high fever; but when Madame Vauthier had told him of all the events that had led up to it in the way in which a housekeeper tells a story, the doctor thought it necessary to report the whole business next day to Monsieur Alain at the church of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas, and Monsieur Alain sent a pencil note by messenger to Monsieur Nicolas, Rue Chanoinesse.

Godefroid, on reaching home the night before, had given the notes on the book to Monsieur Nicolas, who spent the greater part of the night in reading the first volume of Baron Bourlac's work.

On the following day Madame de la Chanterie told Godefroid that if his determination still held good, he might begin on his work at once.

Godefroid, initiated by her into the financial secrets of the Society, worked for seven or eight hours a day, and for several months, under the supervision of Frédéric Mongenod, who came every Sunday to look through the work, and who praised him for the way in which it was done.

"You are a valuable acquisition for the saints among whom you live," said the banker when all the accounts were clearly set forth and balanced. "Two or three hours a day will now be enough to keep the accounts in order, and during the rest of your time you can help them, if you still feel the vocation as you did six months since."

This was in the month of July, 1838. During the time that had elapsed since the affair of the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, Godefroid, eager to prove himself worthy of his companions, had never asked a single question as to Baron

Bourlac; for, as he had not heard a word, nor found anything in the account-books that bore on the matter, he suspected that the silence that was preserved with regard to the two men who had been so ruthless to Madame de la Chanterie, was intended as a test to which he was being put, or perhaps as proof that the noble lady's friends had avenged her.

But, two months later, in the course of a walk one day, he went as far as the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, managed to meet Madame Vauthier, and asked her for some news of the Bernard family.

"Who can tell, my dear Monsieur Godefroid, what has become of those people. Two days after your expedition—for it was you, you cunning dog, who blabbed to my landlord—somebody came who took that old swaggerer off my hands. Then, in four-and-twenty hours, everything was cleared out—not a stick left, nor a word said—perfect strangers to me, and they told me nothing. I believe he packed himself off to Algiers with his precious grandson; for Népomucène, who was very devoted to that young thief—he is no better than he should be himself—did not find him in the Conciergerie, and he alone knows where they are, and the scamp has gone off and left me. You bring up these wretched foundlings and this is the reward you get; they leave you high and dry. I have not been able to find any one to take his place, and, as the neighborhood is very crowded and the house is full, I am worked to death."

And Godefroid would never have known anything more of Baron Bourlac but for the conclusion of the adventure, which came about through one of the chance meetings which occur in Paris.

In the month of September, Godefroid was walking down the Champs-Élysées, when, as he passed the end of the Rue Marbeuf, he remembered Doctor Halpersohn.

"I ought to call on him," thought he, "and ask if he

cured Bourlac's daughter. What a voice, what a gift she had! She wanted to dedicate herself to God!"

As he got to the Rond-Point, Godefroid crossed the road hurriedly to avoid the carriages that came quickly down the grand avenue, and he ran up against a youth who had a young-looking woman on his arm.

"Take care!" cried the young man. "Are you blind?"

"Why, it is you!" cried Godefroid, recognizing Auguste de Mergi.

Auguste was so well dressed, so handsome, so smart, so proud of the lady he was escorting, that, but for the memories that rushed on his mind, Godefroid would hardly have recognized them.

"Why, it is dear Monsieur Godefroid!" exclaimed the lady.

On hearing the delightful tones of Vanda's enchanting voice, and seeing her walking, Godefroid stood riveted to the spot.

"Cured!" he exclaimed.

"Ten days ago he allowed me to walk," she replied.

"Halpersohn?"

"Yes," said she. "And why have you never come to see us? But, indeed, you were wise. My hair was not cut off till about a week ago. This that you see is but a wig; but the doctor assures me it will grow again! But we have so much to say to each other. Will you not come to dine with us? Oh, that melodeon! Oh, monsieur!" and she put her handkerchief to her eyes. "I will treasure it all my life! My son will preserve it as a relic. My father has sought for you all through Paris, and he is anxiously in search, too, of his unknown benefactors. He will die of grief if you cannot help him to find them. He suffers from the deepest and darkest melancholy, and I cannot always succeed in rousing him from it."

Fascinated alike by the voice of this charming woman re-

called from the grave, and by that of irresistible curiosity, Godefroid gave his arm to the hand held out by the Baronne de Mergi, who let her son go on in front with an errand, which the lad had understood from his mother's nod.

"I shall not take you far; we are living in the Allée d'Antin, in a pretty little house of English fashion; we have it all to ourselves, each of us occupies a floor. Oh, we are very comfortable! And my father believes that you have had a great deal to do with the good-fortune that is poured upon us——"

"I?"

"Did you not know that a place has been created for him in consequence of a report from the minister for public instruction, a Chair of Legislature, like one at the Sorbonne? My father will give his first course of lectures in the month of November next. The great work on which he was engaged will be published in a month or so; the house of Cavalier is bringing it out on half-profits with my father, and has paid him thirty thousand francs on account of his share; so he is buying the house we live in. The minister of justice allows me a pension of twelve hundred francs as the daughter of a retired magistrate; my father has his pension of a thousand crowns, and he had five thousand francs with his professorship. We are so economical that we shall be almost rich.

"My Auguste will begin studying the law a few months hence; meanwhile, he has employment in the public prosecutor's office, and gets twelve hundred francs. Oh, Monsieur Godefroid, never mention that miserable business of my poor Auguste's. For my part, I bless him every day for the deed which his grandfather has not yet forgiven. His mother blesses him, Halpersohn is devoted to him, but the old public prosecutor is implacable!"

"What business?" asked Godefroid.

"Ah! that is just like your generosity!" cried Vanda. "You have a noble heart. Your mother must be proud of you——"

"On my word, I know nothing of the matter you allude to," said Godefroid.

"Really, you did not hear?" And she frankly told the story of Auguste's borrowing from the doctor, admiring her son for the action.

"But if I am to say nothing about this before the baron," said Godefroid, "tell me how your son got out of the scrape."

"Well," said Vanda, "as I told you, my son is in the public prosecutor's office, and has met with the greatest kindness. He was not kept more than eight-and-forty hours in the Conciergerie, where he was lodged with the governor. The worthy doctor, who did not get Auguste's beautiful, sublime letter till the evening, withdrew the charge; and by the intervention of a former presiding judge of the Supreme Court—a man my father had never even seen—the public prosecutor had the police agent's report and the warrant for arrest both destroyed. In fact, not a trace of the affair survives but in my heart, in my son's conscience, and in his grandfather's mind—who, since that day, speaks to my boy in the coldest terms, and treats him as a stranger.

"Only yesterday, Halpersohn was interceding for him; but my father, who will not listen to me, much as he loves me, replied: 'You are the person robbed, you can and ought to forgive. But I am answerable for the thief—and, when I sat on the bench, I never pronounced a pardon!' 'You will kill your daughter,' said Halpersohn—I heard them. My father kept silence."

"But who is it that has helped you?"

"A gentleman who is, we believe, employed to distribute the benefactions of the Queen."

"What is he like?" asked Godefroid.

"He is a grave, thin man, sad-looking—something like my father. It was he who had my father conveyed to the house where we now are, when he was in a high fever. And, just

fancy, as soon as my father was well, I was removed from the private hospital and brought there, where I found my old bedroom just as though I had never left it. Halpersohn, whom the tall gentleman had quite bewitched—how I know not—then told me all about my father's sufferings, and how he had sold the diamonds off his snuff-box! My father and my boy often without bread, and making believe to be rich in my presence! Oh, Monsieur Godefroid, those two men are martyrs! What can I say to my father? I can only repay him and my son by suffering for them, like them."

"And had the tall gentleman something of a military air?"

"Oh, you know him!" cried Vanda, as they reached the door of the house.

She seized Godefroid's hand with the grip of a woman in hysterics, and dragging him into a drawing-room of which the door stood open, she exclaimed—"Father, Monsieur Godefroid knows your benefactor."

Baron Bourlac, whom Godefroid found dressed in a style suitable to a retired judge of his high rank, held out his hand to Godefroid, and said—

"I thought as much."

Godefroid shook his head in negation of any knowledge of the details of this noble revenge; but the baron did not give him time to speak.

"Monsieur," he went on, "only Providence can be more powerful, only Love can be more thoughtful, only Motherhood can be more clear-sighted, than your friends who are allied with those great divinities. I bless the chance that has led to our meeting again, for Monsieur Joseph has vanished completely; and as he has succeeded in avoiding every snare I could lay to ascertain his real name and residence, I should have died in grief. But here, read his letter. And you know him?"

Godefroid read as follows:

"Monsieur le Baron Bourlac, the money we have laid out for you by the orders of a charitable lady amounts to a sum of fifteen thousand francs. Take note of this, that it may be repaid either by you or by your descendants when your family is sufficiently prosperous to allow of it, for it belongs to the poor. When such repayment is possible, deposit the money you owe with the Brothers Mongenod, bankers. God forgive you your sins!"

The letter was mysteriously signed with five crosses.

Godefroid returned it. "The five crosses, sure enough!" said he to himself.

"Now, since you know all," said the old man, "you who were this mysterious lady's messenger—tell me her name."

"Her name!" cried Godefroid; "her name! Unhappy man, never ask it! never try to find it out. Oh, madame," said he, taking Madame de Mergi's hand in his own, which shook, "if you value your father's sanity, keep him in his ignorance; never let him make any attempt——"

The father, the daughter, and Auguste stood frozen with amazement.

"But tell it!" said Vanda.

"Well, then, the woman who has preserved your daughter for you," said Godefroid, looking at the old lawyer, "who has restored her to you, young, lovely, fresh, and living—who has snatched her from the grave—who has rescued your grandson from disgrace—who has secured to you a happy and respected old age—who has saved you all three——" he paused, "is a woman whom you sent innocent to the hulks for twenty years," he went on, addressing Monsieur Bourlac, "on whom, from your judgment-seat, you poured every insult, whose saintliness you mocked at, and from whom you snatched a lovely daughter to send her to the most horrible death, for she was guillotined!"

Godefroid, seeing Vanda drop senseless on to a chair,

rushed out of the room, and from thence into the Allée d'Antin, where he took to his heels.

"If you would earn my forgiveness," said Baron Bourlac to his grandson, "follow that man and find out where he lives."

Auguste was off like a dart.

By half-past eight next morning, Baron Bourlac was knocking at the old yellow gate of the Hôtel de la Chanterie, Rue Chanoinesse. He asked for Madame de la Chanterie, and the porter pointed to the stone steps. Happily they were all going to breakfast, and Godefroid recognized the baron in the courtyard through one of the loopholes that lighted the stairs. He had but just time to fly down into the drawing-room where they were all assembled, crying out—"Baron Bourlac."

On hearing this name, Madame de la Chanterie, supported by the Abbé de Vèze, disappeared into her room.

"You shall not come in, you imp of Satan!" cried Manon, who recognized the lawyer and placed herself in front of the drawing-room door. "Do you want to kill my mistress?"

"Come, Manon, let the gentleman pass," said Monsieur Alain.

Manon dropped on to a chair as if her knees had both given way at once.

"Gentlemen," said the baron in a voice of deep emotion, as he recognized Godefroid and Monsieur Joseph, and bowed to the two strangers, "beneficence confers a claim on those benefited by it!"

"You owe nothing to us," said the worthy Alain; "you owe everything to God."

"You are saints, and you have the serenity of saints," replied the old lawyer. "You will hear me, I beg. I have learnt that the superhuman blessings that have been heaped on me for eighteen months past are the work of a person whom I deeply injured in the course of my duty; it was fifteen years

before I was assured of her innocence; this, gentlemen, is the single remorse I have known as due to the exercise of my powers. Listen! I have not much longer to live, but I shall lose that short term of life, necessary still to my children whom Madame de la Chanterie has saved, if I cannot win her forgiveness. Gentlemen, I will remain kneeling on the square of Notre-Dame till she has spoken one word! I will wait for her there! I will kiss the print of her feet; I will find tears to soften her heart—I who have been dried up like stubble by seeing my daughter's sufferings——"

The door of Madame de la Chanterie's room was opened, the Abbé de Vèze came through like a shade, and said to Monsieur Joseph—

"That voice is killing madame."

"What! she is there! She has passed there!" cried Bourlac.

He fell on his knees, kissed the floor, and melted into tears, crying in a heart-rending tone—

"In the name of Jesus who died on the cross, forgive! forgive! For my child has suffered a thousand deaths!"

The old man collapsed so entirely that the spectators believed he was dead.

At this moment Madame de la Chanterie appeared like a spectre in the doorway, leaning, half-fainting, against the side-post.

"In the name of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, whom I see on the scaffold, of Madame Elizabeth, of my daughter, and of yours—in the name of Jesus, I forgive you."

As he heard the words, the old man looked up and said—

"Thus are the angels avenged!"

Monsieur Joseph and Monsieur Nicolas helped him to his feet and led him out to the courtyard; Godefroid went to call a coach; and, when they heard the rattle of wheels, Monsieur Nicolas said, as he helped the old man into it—

"Come, no more, monsieur, or you will kill the mother

too. The power of God is infinite, but human nature has its limits."

That day Godefroid joined the Order of the Brethren of Consolation.

VIERZCHOVNIA, UKRAINE, *December*, 1847.

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AT THE SIGN OF THE CAT AND RACKET

(*La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote*).

Dedicated to Mademoiselle Marie de Montheau.

HALF-WAY down the Rue Saint-Denis, almost at the corner of the Rue du Petit-Lion, there stood formerly one of those delightful houses which enable historians to reconstruct old Paris by analogy. The threatening walls of this tumbledown abode seemed to have been decorated with hieroglyphics. For what other name could the passer-by give to the Xs and Vs which the horizontal or diagonal timbers traced on the front, outlined by little parallel cracks in the plaster? It was evident that every beam quivered in its mortises at the passing of the lightest vehicle. This venerable structure was crowned by a triangular roof of which no example will, ere long, be seen in Paris. This covering, warped by the extremes of the Paris climate, projected three feet over the roadway, as much to protect the threshold from the rainfall as to shelter the wall of a loft and its sill-less dormer window. This upper story was built of planks, overlapping each other like slates, in order, no doubt, not to overweight the frail house.

One rainy morning in the month of March, a young man, carefully wrapped in his cloak, stood under the awning of a store opposite this old house, which he was studying with the enthusiasm of an antiquary. In point of fact, this relic of the civic life of the sixteenth century offered more than one problem to the consideration of an observer. Each story presented some singularity; on the first floor four tall, narrow windows, close together, were filled as to the lower panes with boards, so as to produce the doubtful light by which a clever

clerk can ascribe to his goods the color his customers inquire for. The young man seemed very scornful of this essential part of the house; his eyes had not yet rested on it. The windows of the second floor, where the Venetian blinds were drawn up, revealing little India-muslin curtains behind the large Bohemian glass-panes, did not interest him either. His attention was attracted to the third floor, to the modest sash-frames of wood, so clumsily wrought that they might have found a place in the Museum of Arts and Crafts to illustrate the early efforts of French carpentry. These windows were glazed with small squares of glass so green that, but for his good eyes, the young man could not have seen the blue-checked cotton curtains which screened the mysteries of the room from profane eyes. Now and then the watcher, weary of his fruitless contemplation, or of the silence in which the house was buried, like the whole neighborhood, dropped his eyes toward the lower regions. An involuntary smile parted his lips each time he looked at the store, where, in fact, there were some laughable details.

A formidable wooden beam, resting on four pillars, which appeared to have bent under the weight of the decrepit house, had been incrusted with as many coats of different paint as there are of rouge on an old duchess' cheek. In the middle of this broad and fantastically carved joist there was an old painting representing a cat playing rackets. This picture was what moved the young man to mirth. But it must be said that the wittiest of modern painters could not invent so comical a caricature. The animal held in one of its fore-paws a racket as big as itself, and stood on its hind legs to aim at hitting an enormous ball, returned by a man in a fine embroidered coat. Drawing, color, and accessories, all were treated in such a way as to suggest that the artist had meant to make game of the store-owner and of the passing observer. Time, while impairing this artless painting, had made it yet more grotesque by introducing some uncertain features which

must have puzzled the conscientious idler. For instance, the cat's tail had been eaten into in such a way that it might now have been taken for the figure of a spectator—so long, and thick, and furry were the tails of our forefathers' cats. To the right of the picture, on an azure field which ill disguised the decay of the wood, might be read the name "Guillaume," and to the left, "Successor to Master Chevrel." Sun and rain had worn away most of the gilding parsimoniously applied to the letters of this superscription, in which the Us and Vs had changed places in obedience to the laws of old-world orthography.

To quench the pride of those who believe that the world is growing cleverer day by day, and that modern humbug surpasses everything, it may be observed that these signs, of which the origin seems so whimsical to many Paris merchants, are the dead pictures of once living pictures by which our roguish ancestors contrived to tempt customers into their houses. Thus the Spinning Sow, the Green Monkey, and others, were animals in cages whose skill astonished the passer-by, and whose accomplishments prove the patience of the fifteenth-century artisan. Such curiosities did more to enrich their fortunate owners than the signs of "Providence," "Good-faith," "Grace of God," and "Decapitation of John the Baptist," which may still be seen in the Rue Saint-Denis.

However, our stranger was certainly not standing there to admire the cat, which a minute's attention sufficed to stamp on his memory. The young man himself had his peculiarities. His cloak, folded after the manner of an antique drapery, showed a smart pair of shoes, all the more remarkable in the midst of the Paris mud, because he wore white silk stockings, on which the splashes betrayed his impatience. He had just come, no doubt, from a wedding or a ball; for at this early hour he had in his hand a pair of white gloves, and his black hair, now out of curl, and flowing over his shoulders, showed that it had been dressed *à la Caracalla*, a fashion introduced

as much by David's school of painting as by the mania for Greek and Roman styles which characterized the early years of this century.

In spite of the noise made by a few truck gardeners, who, being late, rattled past toward the great market-place at a gallop, the busy street lay in a stillness of which the magic charm is known only to those who have wandered through deserted Paris at the hours when its roar, hushed for a moment, rises and spreads in the distance like the great voice of the sea. This strange young man must have seemed as curious to the storekeeping folk of the "Cat and Racket" as the "Cat and Racket" was to him. A dazzling white cravat made his anxious face look even paler than it really was. The fire that flashed in his black eyes, gloomy and sparkling by turns, was in harmony with the singular outline of his features, with his wide, flexible mouth, hardened into a smile. His forehead, knit with violent annoyance, had a stamp of doom. Is not the forehead the most prophetic feature of a man? When the stranger's brow expressed passion the furrows formed in it were terrible in their strength and energy; but when he recovered his calmness, so easily upset, it beamed with a luminous grace which gave great attractiveness to a countenance in which joy, grief, love, anger, or scorn blazed out so contagiously that the coldest man could not fail to be impressed.

He was so thoroughly vexed by the time when the dormer window of the loft was suddenly flung open, that he did not observe the apparition of three laughing faces, pink and white and chubby, but as vulgar as the face of Commerce as it is seen in sculpture on certain monuments. These three faces, framed by the window, recalled the puffy cherubs floating among the clouds that surround God the Father. The apprentices snuffed up the exhalations of the street with an eagerness that showed how hot and poisonous the atmosphere of their garret must be. After pointing to the singular sentinel, the most jovial, as he seemed, of the apprentices retired

and came back holding an instrument whose hard metal pipe is now superseded by a leather tube; and they all grinned with mischief as they looked down on the loiterer, and sprinkled him with a fine white shower of which the scent proved that three chins had just been shaved. Standing on tiptoe, in the farthest corner of their loft, to enjoy their victim's rage, the lads ceased laughing on seeing the haughty indifference with which the young man shook his cloak, and the intense contempt expressed by his face as he glanced up at the empty window-frame.

At this moment a slender white hand threw up the lower half of one of the clumsy windows on the third floor by the aid of the sash-runners, of which the pulley so often suddenly gives way and releases the heavy panes it ought to hold up. The watcher was then rewarded for his long waiting. The face of a young girl appeared, as fresh as one of the white cups that bloom on the bosom of the waters, crowned by a frill of tumbled India-muslin, which gave her head a look of exquisite innocence. Though wrapped in brown stuff, her neck and shoulders gleamed here and there through little openings left by her movements in sleep. No expression of embarrassment detracted from the candor of her face, or the calm look of eyes immortalized long since in the sublime works of Raphael; here were the same grace, the same repose as in these Virgins, and now proverbial. There was a delightful contrast between the cheeks of that face on which sleep had, as it were, given high relief to a superabundance of life, and the antiquity of the heavy window with its clumsy shape and black sill. Like those day-blowing flowers, which in the early morning have not yet unfurled their cups, twisted by the chills of night, the girl, as yet hardly awake, let her blue eyes wander beyond the neighboring roofs to look at the sky; then, from habit, she cast them down on the gloomy depths of the street, where they immediately met those of her adorer. Vanity, no doubt, distressed her at being seen in undress; she

started back, the worn pulley gave way, and the sash fell with the rapid run, which in our day has earned for this artless invention of our forefathers an odious name.* The vision had disappeared.

To the young man the most radiant star of morning seemed to be hidden by a cloud.

During these little incidents the heavy inside shutters that protected the slight windows of the store of the "Cat and Racket" had been removed as if by magic. The old door with its knocker was opened back against the wall of the entry by a manservant, apparently coeval with the sign, who, with a shaking hand, hung upon it a square of cloth, on which were embroidered in yellow silk the words: "Guillaume, successor to Chevrel." Many a passer-by would have found it difficult to guess the class of trade carried on by Monsieur Guillaume. Between the strong iron bars which protected his store-windows on the outside, certain packages, wrapped in brown linen, were hardly visible, though as numerous as herrings swimming in a shoal. Notwithstanding the primitive aspect of the Gothic front, Monsieur Guillaume, of all the merchant clothiers in Paris, was the one whose stores were always the best provided, whose connections were the most extensive, and whose commercial honesty never lay under the slightest suspicion. If some of his brethren in business made a contract with the Government, and had not the required quantity of cloth, he was always ready to deliver it, however large the number of pieces tendered for. The wily dealer knew a thousand ways of extracting the largest profits without being obliged, like them, to court patrons, cringing to them, or making them costly presents. When his fellow-tradesmen could only pay in good bills of long date, he would mention his notary as an accommodating man, and managed to get a second profit out of the bargain, thanks to this arrangement, which had made it a proverb among the traders of the Rue

* Fenêtre à la Guillotine: Guillotine-sash.

Saint-Denis: "Heaven preserve you from Monsieur Guillaume's notary!" to signify a heavy discount.

The old merchant was to be seen standing on the threshold of his store, as if by a miracle, the instant the servant withdrew. Monsieur Guillaume looked at the Rue Saint-Denis, at the neighboring stores, and at the weather, like a man disembarking at Havre, and seeing France once more after a long voyage. Having convinced himself that nothing had changed while he was asleep, he presently perceived the stranger on guard, and he, on his part, gazed at the patriarchal draper as Humboldt may have scrutinized the first electric eel he saw in America. Monsieur Guillaume wore loose black velvet breeches, pepper-and-salt stockings, and square-toed shoes with silver buckles. His coat, with square-cut fronts, square-cut tails, and square-cut collar, clothed his slightly bent figure in greenish cloth, finished with white metal buttons, tawny from wear. His gray hair was so accurately combed and flattened over his yellow pate that it made it look like a furrowed field. His little green eyes, that might have been pierced with a gimlet, flashed beneath arches faintly tinged with red in the place of eyebrows. Anxieties had wrinkled his forehead with as many horizontal lines as there were creases in his coat. This colorless face expressed patience, commercial shrewdness, and the sort of wily cupidity which is needful in business. At that time these old families were less rare than they are now, in which the characteristic habits and costume of their calling, surviving in the midst of more recent civilization, were preserved as cherished traditions, like the antediluvian remains found by Cuvier in the quarries.

The head of the Guillaume family was a notable upholder of ancient practices; he might be heard to regret the Provost of Merchants, and never did he mention a decision of the Tribunal of Commerce without calling it the "Sentence of the Consuls." Up and dressed the first of the household, in obedience, no doubt, to these old customs, he stood sternly

awaiting the appearance of his three assistants, ready to scold them in case they were late. These young disciples of Mercury knew nothing more terrible than the wordless assiduity with which the master scrutinized their faces and their movements on Monday in search of evidence or traces of their pranks. But at this moment the old clothier paid no heed to his apprentices; he was absorbed in trying to divine the motive of the anxious looks which the young man in silk stockings and a cloak cast alternately at his signboard and into the depths of his store. The daylight was now brighter, and enabled the stranger to discern the cashier's corner inclosed by a railing and screened by old, green-silk curtains, where were kept the immense ledgers, the silent oracles of the house. The too inquisitive gazer seemed to covet this little nook, and to be taking the plan of a dining-room at one side, lighted by a skylight, whence the family at meals could easily see the smallest incident that might occur at the store-door. So much affection for his dwelling seemed suspicious to a trader who had lived long enough to remember the law of maximum prices; Monsieur Guillaume naturally thought that this sinister personage had an eye to the till of the Cat and Racket. After quietly observing the mute duel which was going on between his master and the stranger, the eldest of the apprentices, having seen that the young man was stealthily watching the windows of the third floor, ventured to place himself on the flagstone where Monsieur Guillaume was standing. He took two steps out into the street, raised his head, and fancied that he caught sight of Mademoiselle Augustine Guillaume in hasty retreat. The draper, annoyed by his assistant's perspicacity, shot a side-glance at him; but the draper and his amorous apprentice were suddenly relieved from the fears which the young man's presence had excited in their minds. He hailed a hackney-coach on its way to a neighboring stand, and jumped into it with an air of affected indifference. This departure was a balm to the hearts of the other two lads, who had been

somewhat uneasy as to meeting the victim of their practical joke.

"Well, gentlemen, what ails you that you are standing there with your arms folded?" said Monsieur Guillaume to his three neophytes. "In former days, bless you, when I was in Master Chevrel's service, I should have overhauled more than two pieces of cloth by this time."

"Then it was daylight earlier," said the second assistant, whose duty this was.

The old storekeeper could not help smiling. Though two of these young fellows, who were confided to his care by their fathers, rich manufacturers at Louvres and at Sedan, had only to ask and to have a hundred thousand francs the day when they were old enough to settle in life, Guillaume regarded it as his duty to keep them under the rod of an old-world despotism, unknown nowadays in the showy modern stores, where the apprentices expect to be rich men at thirty. He made them work like negroes. These three assistants were equal to a business which would harry ten such clerks as those whose sybaritical tastes now swell the columns of the budget. Not a sound disturbed the peace of this solemn house, where the hinges were always oiled, and where the meanest article of furniture showed the respectable cleanliness which reveals strict order and economy. The most waggish of the three youths often amused himself by writing the date of its first appearance on the Gruyère cheese which was left to their tender mercies at breakfast, and which it was their pleasure to leave untouched. This bit of mischief, and a few others of the same stamp, would sometimes bring a smile on the face of the younger of Guillaume's two daughters, the pretty maiden who had just now appeared to the bewitched man in the street.

Though each of the apprentices, even the eldest, paid a round sum for his board, not one of them would have been bold enough to remain at the master's table when dessert was served. When Madame Guillaume talked of dressing the

salad, the hapless youths trembled as they thought of the thrift with which her prudent hand dispensed the oil. They could never think of spending a night away from the house without having given, long before, a plausible reason for such an irregularity. Every Sunday, each in his turn, two of them accompanied the Guillaume family to mass at Saint-Leu, and to vespers. Mesdemoiselles Virginie and Augustine, simply attired in calico print, each took the arm of an apprentice and walked in front, under the piercing eye of their mother, who closed the little family procession with her husband, accustomed by her to carry two large prayer-books, bound in black morocco. The second apprentice received no salary. As for the eldest, whose twelve years of perseverance and discretion had initiated him into the secrets of the house, he was paid eight hundred francs a year as the reward of his labors. On certain family festivals he received as a gratuity some little gift, to which Madame Guillaume's dry and wrinkled hand alone gave value—netted purses, which she took care to stuff with cotton-batting, to show off the fancy stitches, braces of the strongest make, or heavy silk stockings. Sometimes, but rarely, this prime minister was admitted to share the pleasures of the family when they went into the country, or when, after waiting for months, they made up their mind to exert the right acquired by taking a box at the theatre to command a piece which Paris had already forgotten.

As to the other assistants, the barrier of respect which formerly divided a master draper from his apprentices was so firmly established between them and the old storekeeper, that they would have been more likely to steal a piece of cloth than to infringe this time-honored etiquette. Such reserve may now appear ridiculous; but these old houses were a school of honesty and sound morals. The masters adopted their apprentices. The young man's linen was cared for, mended, and often replaced by the mistress of the house. If an apprentice fell ill, he was the object of truly maternal at-

tention. In a case of danger the master lavished his money in calling in the most celebrated physicians, for he was not answerable to their parents merely for the good conduct and training of the lads. If one of them, whose character was unimpeachable, suffered misfortune, these old tradesmen knew how to value the intelligence he had displayed, and they did not hesitate to intrust the happiness of their daughters to men whom they had long trusted with their fortunes. Guillaume was one of these men of the old school, and if he had their ridiculous side, he had all their good qualities; and Joseph Lebas, the chief assistant, an orphan without any fortune, was in his mind destined to be the husband of Virginie, his elder daughter. But Joseph did not share the symmetrical ideas of his master, who would not for an empire have given his second daughter in marriage before the elder. The unhappy assistant felt that his heart was wholly given to Mademoiselle Augustine, the younger. In order to justify this passion, which had grown up in secret, it is necessary to inquire a little further into the springs of the absolute government which ruled the old cloth-merchant's household.

Guillaume had two daughters. The elder, Mademoiselle Virginie, was the very image of her mother. Madame Guillaume, daughter of the Sieur Chevrel, sat so upright in the stool behind her desk, that more than once she had heard some wag bet that she was a stuffed figure. Her long, thin face betrayed exaggerated piety. Devoid of attractions or of amiable manners, Madame Guillaume commonly decorated her head—that of a woman near on sixty—with a cap of a particular and unvarying shape, with long lappets, like that of a widow. In all the neighborhood she was known as the "portress nun." Her speech was curt, and her movements had the stiff precision of a semaphore. Her eye, with a gleam in it like a cat's, seemed to spite the world because she was so ugly. Mademoiselle Virginie, brought up, like her younger sister, under the domestic rule of her mother, had

reached the age of eight-and-twenty. Youth mitigated the graceless effect which her likeness to her mother sometimes gave to her features, but maternal austerity had endowed her with two great qualities which made up for everything. She was patient and gentle. Mademoiselle Augustine, who was but just eighteen, was not like either her father or her mother. She was one of those daughters whose total absence of any physical affinity with their parents makes one believe in the adage: God gives children. Augustine was little, or, to describe her more truly, delicately made. Full of gracious candor, a man of the world could have found no fault in the charming girl beyond a certain meanness of gesture or vulgarity of attitude, and sometimes a want of ease. Her silent and placid face was full of the transient melancholy which comes over all young girls who are too weak to dare to resist their mother's will.

The two sisters, always plainly dressed, could not gratify the innate vanity of womanhood but by a luxury of cleanliness which became them wonderfully, and made them harmonize with the polished counters and the shining shelves, on which the old manservant never left a speck of dust, and with the old-world simplicity of all they saw about them. As their style of living compelled them to find the elements of happiness in persistent work, Augustine and Virginie had hitherto always satisfied their mother, who secretly prided herself on the perfect characters of her two daughters. It is easy to imagine the results of the training they had received. Brought up to a commercial life, accustomed to hear nothing but dreary arguments and calculations about trade, having studied nothing but grammar, bookkeeping, a little Bible-history, and the history of France in Le Ragois, and never reading any book but those their mother would sanction, their ideas had not acquired much scope. They knew perfectly how to keep house; they were familiar with the prices of things; they understood the difficulty of amassing money;

they were economical, and had a great respect for the qualities that make a man of business. Although their father was rich, they were as skilled in darning as in embroidery; their mother often talked of having them taught to cook, so that they might know how to order a dinner and scold a cook with due knowledge. They knew nothing of the pleasures of the world; and, seeing how their parents spent their exemplary lives, they very rarely suffered their eyes to wander beyond the walls of their hereditary home, which to their mother was the whole universe. The meetings to which family anniversaries gave rise filled in the future of earthly joy to them.

When the great drawing-room on the second floor was to be prepared to receive company—Madame Roquin, a Demoiselle Chevrel, fifteen months younger than her cousin, and bedecked with diamonds; young Rabourdin, employed in the Finance Office; Monsieur César Birotteau, the rich perfumer, and his wife, known as Madame César; Monsieur Camusot, the richest silk mercer in the Rue des Bourdonnais, with his father-in-law, Monsieur Cardot, two or three old bankers, and some immaculate ladies—the arrangements, made necessary by the way in which everything was packed away—the plate, the Dresden china, the candlesticks, and the glass—made a variety in the monotonous lives of the three women, who came and went and exerted themselves as nuns would to receive their bishop. Then, in the evening, when all three were tired out with having wiped, rubbed, unpacked, and arranged all the gauds of the festival, as the girls helped their mother to undress, Madame Guillaume would say to them, "Children, we have done nothing to-day."

When, on very great occasions, "the portress nun" allowed dancing, restricting the games of boston, whist, and backgammon within the limits of her bedroom, such a concession was accounted as the most unhoped felicity, and made them happier than going to the great balls, to two or three of which Guillaume would take the girls at the time of the Carnival.

And once a year the worthy draper gave an entertainment, when he spared no expense. However rich and fashionable the persons invited might be, they were careful not to be absent; for the most important houses on the Exchange had recourse to the immense credit, the fortune, or the time-honored experience of Monsieur Guillaume. Still, the excellent merchant's two daughters did not benefit as much as might be supposed by the lessons the world has to offer to young spirits. At these parties, which were indeed set down in the ledger to the credit of the house, they wore dresses the shabbiness of which made them blush. Their style of dancing was not in any way remarkable, and their mother's surveillance did not allow of their holding any conversation with their partners beyond Yes and No. Also, the law of the old sign of the Cat and Racket commanded that they should be home by eleven o'clock, the hour when balls and fêtes begin to be lively. Thus their pleasures, which seemed to conform very fairly to their father's position, were often made insipid by circumstances which were part of the family habits and principles.

As to their usual life, one remark will sufficiently paint it. Madame Guillaume required her daughters to be dressed very early in the morning, to come down every day at the same hour, and she ordered their employments with monastic regularity. Augustine, however, had been gifted by chance with a spirit lofty enough to feel the emptiness of such a life. Her blue eyes would sometimes be raised as if to pierce the depths of that gloomy staircase and those damp warerooms. After sounding the profound cloistral silence, she seemed to be listening to remote, inarticulate revelations of the life of passion, which accounts feelings as of higher value than things. And at such moments her cheek would flush, her idle hands would lay the muslin sewing on the polished oak counter, and presently her mother would say in a voice, of which even the softest tones were sour: "Augustine, my treasure, what are

you thinking about?" It is possible that two romances discovered by Augustine in the cupboard of a cook Madame Guillaume had lately discharged—"Hippolyte Comte de Douglas" and "Le Comte de Comminges"—may have contributed to develop the ideas of the young girl, who had devoured them in secret, during the long nights of the past winter.

And so Augustine's expression of vague longing, her gentle voice, her jasmine skin, and her blue eyes had lighted in poor Lebas' soul a flame as ardent as it was reverent. From an easily understood caprice, Augustine felt no affection for the orphan; perhaps because she did not know that he loved her. On the other hand, the senior apprentice, with his long legs, his chestnut hair, his big hands and powerful frame, had found a secret admirer in Mademoiselle Virginie, who, in spite of her dower of fifty thousand crowns, had as yet no suitor. Nothing could be more natural than these two passions at cross-purposes, born in the silence of the dingy store, as violets bloom in the depths of a wood. The mute and constant looks which made the young people's eyes meet by sheer need of change in the midst of persistent work and cloistered peace, was sure, sooner or later, to give rise to feelings of love. The habit of seeing always the same face leads insensibly to our reading there the qualities of the soul, and at last effaces all its defects.

"At the pace at which that man goes, our girls will soon have to go on their knees to a suitor!" said Monsieur Guillaume to himself, as he read the first decree by which Napoleon drew in advance on the conscript classes.

From that day the old merchant, grieved at seeing his eldest daughter fade, remembered how he had married Mademoiselle Chevrel under much the same circumstances as those of Joseph Lebas and Virginie. A good bit of business, to marry off his daughter, and discharge a sacred debt by repaying to an orphan the benefit he had formerly received from his

predecessor under similar conditions! Joseph Lebas, who was now three-and-thirty, was aware of the obstacle which a difference of fifteen years placed between Augustine and himself. Being also too clear-sighted not to understand Monsieur Guillaume's purpose, he knew his inexorable principles well enough to feel sure that the second would never marry before the elder. So the hapless assistant, whose heart was as warm as his legs were long and his chest deep, suffered in silence.

This was the state of affairs in the tiny republic which, in the heart of the Rue Saint-Denis, was not unlike a dependency of La Trappe.* But to give a full account of events as well as of feelings, it is needful to go back to some months before the scene with which this story opens. At dusk one evening, a young man, passing the darkened store of the Cat and Racket, had paused for a moment to gaze at a picture which might have arrested every painter in the world. The store was not yet lighted, and was as a dark cave, beyond which the dining-room was visible. A hanging-lamp shed the yellow light which lends such charm to pictures of the Dutch school. The white linen, the silver, the cut-glass, were brilliant accessories, and made more picturesque by strong contrasts of light and shade. The figures of the head of the family and his wife, the faces of the apprentices, and the pure form of Augustine, near whom a fat, chubby-cheeked maid was standing, composed so strange a group; the heads were so singular, and every face had so candid an expression; it was so easy to read the peace, the silence, the modest way of life in this family, that, to an artist accustomed to render nature, there was something hopeless in any attempt to depict this scene, come upon by chance. The stranger was a young painter, who, seven years before, had gained the first prize for painting. He had now just come back from Rome. His soul, full-fed with poetry; his eyes, satiated with Raphael and Michael Angelo, thirsted for real nature after long dwelling in the pompous land where

* A Cisterian abbey of severe asceticism.

art has everywhere left something grandiose. Right or wrong, this was his personal feeling. His heart, which had long been a prey to the fire of Italian passion, craved one of those modest and meditative maidens whom in Rome he had unfortunately seen only in paintings. From the enthusiasm produced in his excited fancy by the living picture before him, he naturally passed to a profound admiration for the principal figure; Augustine seemed to be pensive, and did not eat; by the arrangement of the lamp the light fell full on her face, and her bust seemed to move in a circle of fire, which threw up the shape of her head and illuminated it with almost supernatural effect. The artist involuntarily compared her to an exiled angel, dreaming of heaven. An almost unknown emotion, a limpid, seething love flooded his heart. After remaining a minute, overwhelmed by the weight of his ideas, he tore himself from his bliss, went home, ate nothing, and could not sleep.

The next day he went to his studio, and did not come out of it till he had placed on canvas the magic of the scene of which the memory had, in a sense, made him a devotee; his happiness was incomplete till he should possess a faithful portrait of his idol. He went many times past the house of the Cat and Racket; he even ventured in once or twice, under a disguise, to get a closer view of the bewitching creature that Madame Guillaume covered with her wing. For eight whole months, devoted to his love and to his brush, he was lost to the sight of his most intimate friends, forgetting the world, the theatre, poetry, music, and all his dearest habits. One morning Girodet broke through all the barriers with which artists are familiar, and which they know how to evade, went into his room, and woke him by asking: "What are you going to send to the Salon?" The artist grasped his friend's hand, dragged him off to the studio, uncovered a small easel picture and a portrait. After a long and eager study of the two masterpieces, Girodet threw himself on his comrade's

neck and hugged him, without speaking a word. His feelings could only be expressed as he felt them—soul to soul.

"You are in love?" said Girodet.

They both knew that the finest portraits by Titian, Raphael, and Leonardo da Vinci were the outcome of the enthusiastic sentiments by which, indeed, under various conditions, every masterpiece is engendered. The artist only bent his head in reply.

"How happy are you to be able to be in love, here, after coming back from Italy! But I do not advise you to send such works as these to the Salon," the great painter went on. "You see, these two works will not be appreciated. Such true coloring, such prodigious work, cannot yet be understood; the public is not accustomed to such depths. The pictures we paint, my dear fellow, are mere screens. We should do better to turn rhymes, and translate the antique poets! There is more glory to be looked for there than from our luckless canvasses!"

Notwithstanding this charitable advice, the two pictures were exhibited. The "Interior" made a revolution in painting. It gave birth to the pictures of genre which pour into all our exhibitions in such prodigious quantity that they might be supposed to be produced by machinery. As to the portrait, few artists have forgotten that lifelike work; and the public, which as a body is sometimes discerning, awarded it the crown which Girodet himself had hung over it. The two pictures were surrounded by a vast throng. They fought for places, as women say. Speculators and moneyed men would have covered the canvas with double Napoleons, but the artist obstinately refused to sell or to make replicas. An enormous sum was offered him for the right of engraving them, but the printsellers were not more favored than the amateurs.

Though these incidents occupied the world, they were not of a nature to penetrate the recesses of the monastic solitude in the Rue Saint-Denis. However, when paying a visit to

Madame Guillaume, the notary's wife spoke of the exhibition before Augustine, of whom she was very fond, and explained its purpose. Madame Roquin's gossip naturally inspired Augustine with a wish to see the pictures, and with courage enough to ask her cousin secretly to take her to the Louvre. Her cousin succeeded in the negotiations she opened with Madame Guillaume for permission to release the young girl for two hours from her dull labors. Augustine was thus able to make her way through the crowd to see the crowned work. A fit of trembling shook her like an aspen leaf as she recognized herself. She was terrified, and looked about her to find Madame Roquin, from whom she had been separated by a tide of people. At that moment her frightened eyes fell on the impassioned face of the young painter. She at once recalled the figure of a loiterer whom, being curious, she had frequently observed, believing him to be a new neighbor.

"You see how love has inspired me," said the artist in the timid creature's ear, and she stood in dismay at the words.

She found supernatural courage to enable her to push through the crowd and join her cousin, who was still struggling with the mass of people that hindered her from getting to the picture.

"You will be stifled!" cried Augustine. "Let us go."

But there are moments, at the Salon, when two women are not always free to direct their steps through the galleries. By the irregular course to which they were compelled by the press, Mademoiselle Guillaume and her cousin were pushed to within a few steps of the second picture. Chance thus brought them, both together, to where they could easily see the canvas made famous by fashion, for once in agreement with talent. Madame Roquin's exclamation of surprise was lost in the hubbub and buzz of the crowd; Augustine involuntarily shed tears at the sight of this wonderful study. Then, by an almost unaccountable impulse, she laid her finger on her lips, as she perceived quite near her the ecstatic face

of the young painter. The stranger replied by a nod, and pointed to Madame Roquin, as a spoil-sport, to show Augustine that he had understood. This pantomime struck the young girl like hot coals on her flesh ; she felt quite guilty as she perceived that there was a compact between herself and the artist. The suffocating heat, the dazzling sight of beautiful dresses, the bewilderment produced in Augustine's brain by the truth of coloring, the multitude of living or painted figures, the profusion of gilt frames, gave her a sense of intoxication which doubled her alarms. She would perhaps have fainted if an unknown rapture had not surged up in her heart to vivify her whole being, in spite of this chaos of sensations. She nevertheless believed herself to be under the power of the devil, of whose awful snares she had been warned by the thundering words of preachers. This moment was to her like a moment of madness. She found herself accompanied to her cousin's carriage by the young man, radiant with joy and love. Augustine, a prey to an agitation new to her experience, an intoxication which seemed to abandon her to nature, listened to the eloquent voice of her heart, and looked again and again at the young painter, betraying the emotion that came over her. Never had the bright rose of her cheeks shown in stronger contrast with the whiteness of her skin. The artist saw her beauty in all its bloom, her maiden modesty in all its glory. She herself felt a sort of rapture mingled with terror at thinking that her presence had brought happiness to him whose name was on every lip, and whose talent lent immortality to transient scenes. She was loved ! It was impossible to doubt it. When she no longer saw the artist, these simple words still echoed in her ear: "You see how love has inspired me ! " And the throbs of her heart, as they grew deeper, seemed a pain, her heated blood revealed so many unknown forces in her being. She affected a severe headache to avoid replying to her cousin's questions concerning the pictures ; but on their return Madame Roquin

could not forbear from speaking to Madame Guillaume of the fame that had fallen on the house of the Cat and Racket, and Augustine quaked in every limb as she heard her mother say that she should go to the Salon to see her house there. The young girl again declared herself suffering, and obtained leave to go to bed.

"That is what comes of sight-seeing," exclaimed Monsieur Guillaume—"a headache. And is it so very amusing to see in a picture what you can see any day in your own street? Don't talk to me of your artists! Like writers, they are a starveling crew. Why the devil need they choose my house to flout it in their pictures?"

"It may help to sell a few ells more of cloth," said Joseph Lebas.

This remark did not protect art and thought from being condemned once again before the judgment-seat of trade. As may be supposed, these speeches did not infuse much hope into Augustine, who, during the night, gave herself up to the first meditations of love. The events of the day were like a dream, which it was joy to recall to her mind. She was initiated into the fears, the hopes, the remorse, all the ebb and flow of feeling which could not fail to toss a heart so simple and so timid as hers. What a void she perceived in this gloomy house! What a treasure she found in her soul! To be the wife of a genius, to share his glory! What ravages must such a vision make in the heart of a girl brought up among such a family! What hopes must it raise in a young creature who, in the midst of sordid elements, had pined for a life of elegance! A sunbeam had fallen into the prison. Augustine was suddenly in love. So many of her feelings were soothed that she succumbed without reflection. At eighteen does not love hold a prism between the world and the eyes of a young girl? She was incapable of suspecting the hard facts which result from the union of a loving woman with a man of imagination, and she believed herself called to

make him happy, not seeing any disparity between herself and him. To her the future would be as the present. When, next day, her father and mother returned from the Salon, their dejected faces proclaimed some disappointment. In the first place, the painter had removed the two pictures; and then Madame Guillaume had lost her cashmere shawl. But the news that the pictures had disappeared from the walls since her visit revealed to Augustine a delicacy of sentiment which a woman can always appreciate, even by instinct.

On the morning when, on his way home from a ball, Théodore de Sommervieux—for this was the name which fame had stamped on Augustine's heart—had been squirted on by the apprentices while awaiting the appearance of his artless little friend, who certainly did not know that he was there, the lovers had seen each other for the fourth time only since their meeting at the Salon. The difficulties which the rule of the house placed in the way of the painter's ardent nature gave added violence to his passion for Augustine.

How could he get near to a young girl seated in a counting-house between two such women as Mademoiselle Virginie and Madame Guillaume? How could he correspond with her when her mother never left her side? Ingenious, as lovers are, to imagine woes, Théodore saw a rival in one of the assistants, to whose interests he supposed the others to be devoted. If he should evade these sons of Argus, he would yet be wrecked under the stern eyes of the old draper or of Madame Guillaume. The very vehemence of his passion hindered the young painter from hitting on the ingenious expedients which, in prisoners and in lovers, seem to be the last effort of intelligence spurred by a wild craving for liberty or by the fire of love. Théodore wandered about the neighborhood with the restlessness of a madman, as though movement might inspire him with some device. After racking his imagination, it occurred to him to bribe the blowsy waiting-maid with gold. Thus a few notes were exchanged at long

intervals during the fortnight following the ill-starred morning when Monsieur Guillaume and Théodore had so scrutinized one another. At the present moment the young couple had agreed to see each other at a certain hour of the day, and on Sunday, at Saint-Leu, during mass and vespers. Augustine had sent her dear Théodore a list of the relations and friends of the family, to whom the young painter tried to get access, in the hope of interesting, if it were possible, in his love affairs, one of these souls absorbed in money and trade, to whom a genuine passion must appear a quite monstrous speculation, a thing unheard of. Nothing, meanwhile, was altered at the sign of the Cat and Racket. If Augustine was absent-minded, if, against all obedience to the domestic code, she stole up to her room to make signals by means of a jar of flowers, if she sighed, if she were lost in thought, no one observed it, not even her mother. This will cause some surprise to those who have entered into the spirit of the household, where an idea tainted with poetry would be in startling contrast to persons and things, where no one could venture on a gesture or a look which would not be seen and analyzed. Nothing, however, could be more natural; the quiet barque that navigated the stormy waters of the Paris Exchange, under the flag of the Cat and Racket, was just now in the toils of one of these tempests which, returning periodically, might be termed equinoctial. For the last fortnight the five men forming the crew, with Madame Guillaume and Mademoiselle Virginie, had been devoting themselves to the hard labor, known as stock-taking.

Every bale was turned over, and the length verified to ascertain the exact value of the remnant. The ticket attached to each parcel was carefully examined to see at what time the piece had been bought. The retail price was fixed. Monsieur Guillaume, always on his feet, his pen behind his ear, was like a captain commanding the working of the ship. His sharp tones, spoken through a trap-door, to inquire into the depths

of the hold in the cellar-store, gave utterance to the barbarous formulas of trade-jargon, which find expression only in a private cypher.

"How much H. N. Z.?" "All sold." "What is left of Q. X.?" "Two ells." "At what price?" "Fifty-five three." "Set down A. at three, with all of J. J., all of M. P., and what is left of V. D. O." A hundred other injunctions equally intelligible were spouted over the counters like verses of modern poetry, quoted by romantic spirits, to excite each other's enthusiasm for one of their poets. In the evening Guillaume, shut up with his assistant and his wife, balanced his accounts, carried on the balance, wrote to debtors in arrears, and made out bills. All three were busy over this enormous labor, of which the result could be stated on a sheet of foolscap, proving to the head of the house that there was so much to the good in hard cash, so much in goods, so much in bills and notes; that he did not owe a sou; that a hundred or two hundred thousand francs were owing to him; that the capital had been increased; that the farm-lands, the houses, or the investments were extended, or repaired, or doubled. Whence it became necessary to begin again with increased ardor, to accumulate more crown-pieces, without its ever entering the brain of these laborious ants to ask—"To what end?"

Favored by this annual tormoil, the happy Augustine escaped the investigations of her Argus-eyed relations. At last, one Saturday evening, the stock-taking was finished. The figures of the sum-total showed a row of 0's long enough to allow Guillaume for once to relax the stern rule as to dessert which reigned throughout the year. The shrewd old draper rubbed his hands, and allowed his assistants to remain at table. The members of the crew had hardly swallowed their thimbleful of some home-made liqueur, when the rumble of a carriage was heard. The family party were going to see "Gendrillon" at the Variétés, while the two younger apprentices

each received a crown of six francs, with permission to go wherever they chose, provided they were in by midnight.

Notwithstanding this debauch, the old cloth-merchant was shaving himself at six next morning, put on his maroon-colored coat, of which the glowing lights afforded him perennial enjoyment, fastened a pair of gold buckles on the knee-straps of his ample satin breeches; and then, at about seven o'clock, while all were still sleeping in the house, he made his way to the little office adjoining the store on the first floor. Daylight came in through a window, fortified by iron bars, and looking out on a small yard surrounded by such black walls that it was very like a well. The old merchant opened the iron-lined shutters, which were so familiar to him, and threw up the lower half of the sash window. The icy air of the courtyard came in to cool the hot atmosphere of the little room, full of the odor peculiar to offices.

The merchant remained standing, his hand resting on the greasy arm of a large cane-seated chair lined with morocco, of which the original hue had disappeared; he seemed to hesitate as to seating himself. He looked with affection at the double desk, where his wife's seat, opposite his own, was fitted into a little niche in the wall. He contemplated the numbered boxes, the files, the implements, the cash-box—objects all of immemorial origin, and fancied himself in the room with the shade of Master Chevrel. He even pulled out the high stool on which he had once sat in the presence of his departed master. This stool, covered with black leather, the horse-hair showing at every corner—as it had long done, without, however, coming out—he placed with a shaking hand on the very spot where his predecessor had put it, and then, with an emotion difficult to describe, he pulled a bell, which rang at the head of Joseph Lebas' bed. When this decisive blow had been struck, the old man, for whom, no doubt, these reminiscences were too much, took up three or four bills of exchange, and looked at them without seeing them.

Suddenly Joseph Lebas stood before him.

"Sit down there," said Guillaume, pointing to the stool.

As the old master draper had never yet bade his assistant be seated in his presence, Joseph Lebas was startled.

"What do you think of these notes?" asked Guillaume.

"They will never be paid."

"Why?"

"Well, I heard that the day before yesterday Etienne & Co. had made their payments in gold."

"Oh, oh!" said the draper. "Well, one must be very ill to show one's bile. Let us speak of something else. Joseph, the stock-taking is done."

"Yes, monsieur, and the dividend is one of the best you have ever made."

"Do not use new-fangled words. Say the profits, Joseph. Do you know, my boy, that this result is partly owing to you? And I do not intend to pay you a salary any longer. Madame Guillaume has suggested to me to take you into partnership. 'Guillaume & Lebas;' will not that make a good business name? We might add 'and Co.' to round off the firm's signature."

Tears rose to the eyes of Joseph Lebas, who tried to hide them.

"Oh, Monsieur Guillaume, how have I deserved such kindness? I only do my duty. It was so much already that you should take an interest in a poor orph——"

He was brushing the cuff of his left sleeve with his right hand, and dared not look at the old man, who smiled as he thought that this modest young fellow no doubt needed, as he had needed once on a time, some encouragement to complete his explanation.

"To be sure," said Virginie's father, "you do not altogether deserve this favor, Joseph. You have not so much confidence in me as I have in you." (The young man looked up quickly.) "You know all the secrets of the cash-box. For

the last two years I have told you of almost all my concerns. I have sent you to travel in our goods. In short, I have nothing on my conscience as regards you. But you—you have a soft place, and you have never breathed a word of it." Joseph Lebas blushed. "Ah, ha!" cried Guillaume, "so you thought you could deceive an old fox like me? When you knew that I had scented the Lecocq bankruptcy?"

"What, monsieur?" replied Joseph Lebas, looking at his master as keenly as his master looked at him, "you knew that I was in love?"

"I know everything, you rascal," said the worthy and cunning old merchant, pulling the assistant's ear. "And I forgive you—I did the same myself."

"And you will give her to me?"

"Yes—with fifty thousand crowns; and I will leave you as much by will, and we will start on our new career under the name of a new firm. We will do good business yet, my boy!" added the old man, getting up and flourishing his arms. "I tell you, son-in-law, there is nothing like trade. Those who ask what pleasure is to be found in it are simpletons. To be on the scent of a good bargain, to hold your own on 'Change, to watch as anxiously as at the gaming-table whether Etienne & Co. will fail or not, to see a regiment of Guards march past all dressed in your cloth, to trip your neighbor up—honestly, of course!—to make the goods cheaper than others can; then to carry out an undertaking which you have planned, which begins, grows, totters, and succeeds! to know the workings of every house of business as well as a minister of police, so as never to make a mistake; to hold up your head in the midst of wrecks, to have friends by correspondence in every manufacturing town; is not that a perpetual game, Joseph? That is life, that is! I shall die in that harness, like old Chevrel, but taking it easy now, all the same."

In the heat of his eager rhetoric, old Guillaume had scarcely

looked at his assistant, who was weeping copiously. "Why, Joseph, my poor boy, what is the matter?"

"Oh, I love her so! Monsieur Guillaume, that my heart fails me; I believe——"

"Well, well, boy," said the old man, touched, "you are happier than you know, by Gad! For she loves you. I know it."

And he blinked his little green eyes as he looked at the young man.

"Mademoiselle Augustine! Mademoiselle Augustine!" exclaimed Joseph Lebas in his rapture.

He was about to rush out of the room when he felt himself clutched by a hand of iron, and his astonished master spun him round in front of him once more.

"What has Augustine to do with this matter?" he asked, in a voice which instantly froze the luckless Joseph.

"Is it not she that—that—I love?" stammered the assistant.

Much put out by his own want of perspicacity, Guillaume sat down again, and rested his long head in his hands to consider the perplexing situation in which he found himself. Joseph Lebas, quite shamefaced and in utter despair, remained standing.

"Joseph," the draper said with frigid dignity, "I was speaking of Virginie. Love cannot be made to order, I know. I know, too, that you can be trusted. We will forget all this. I will not let Augustine marry before Virginie. Your interest will be ten per cent."

The young man, to whom love gave I know not what power of courage and eloquence, clasped his hand, and spoke in his turn—spoke for a quarter of an hour, with so much warmth and feeling, that he altered the situation. If the question had been a matter of business, the old tradesman would have had fixed principles to guide his decision; but, tossed a thousand miles from commerce, on the ocean of sentiment, with-

out a compass, he floated, as he told himself, undecided in the face of such an unexpected event. Carried away by his fatherly kindness, he began to beat about the bush.

"Deuce take it, Joseph, you must know that there are ten years between my two children. Mademoiselle Chevrel was no beauty, still she has had nothing to complain of in me. Do as I did. Come, come, don't cry. Can you be so silly? What is to be done? It can be managed perhaps. There is always some way out of a scrape. And we men are not always devoted Celadons to our wives—you understand? Madame Guillaume is very pious. Come. By Gad, boy, give your arm to Augustine this morning as we go to mass."

These were the phrases spoken at random by the old draper, and their conclusion made the lover happy. He was already thinking of a friend of his as a match for Mademoiselle Virginie, as he went out of the smoky office, pressing his future father-in-law's hand, after saying with a knowing look that all would turn out for the best.

"What will Madame Guillaume say to it?" was the idea that greatly troubled the worthy merchant when he found himself alone.

At breakfast Madame Guillaume and Virginie, to whom the draper had not as yet confided his disappointment, cast meaning glances at Joseph Lebas, who was extremely embarrassed. The young assistant's bashfulness commended him to his mother-in-law's good graces. The matron became so cheerful that she smiled as she looked at her husband, and allowed herself some little pleasantries of time-honored acceptance in such simple families. She wondered whether Joseph or Virginie were the taller, to ask them to compare their height. This preliminary fooling brought a cloud to the master's brow, and he even made such a point of decorum that he desired Augustine to take the assistant's arm on their way to Saint-Leu. Madame Guillaume, surprised at this manly delicacy, honored her husband with a nod of approval. So the procession left the house

in such order as to suggest no suspicious meaning to the neighbors.

"Does it not seem to you, Mademoiselle Augustine," said the assistant, and he trembled, "that the wife of a merchant whose credit is as good as Monsieur Guillaume's, for instance, might enjoy herself a little more than madame your mother does? Might wear diamonds—or keep a carriage? For my part, if I were to marry, I should be glad to take all the work and see my wife happy. I would not put her into the counting-house. In the drapery business, you see, a woman is not so necessary now as formerly. Monsieur Guillaume was quite right to act as he did—and, beside, his wife liked it. But so long as a woman knows how to turn her hand to the book-keeping, the correspondence, the retail business, the orders, and her housekeeping, so as not to sit idle, that is enough. At seven o'clock, when the store is shut, I shall take my pleasures, go to the play, and into company. But you are not listening to me."

"Yes, indeed, Monsieur Joseph. What do you think of painting? That is a fine calling."

"Yes. I know a master house-painter, Monsieur Lourdois. He is well-to-do."

Thus conversing, the family reached the church of Saint-Leu. There Madame Guillaume reasserted her rights, and, for the first time, placed Augustine next to herself, Virginie taking her place on the fourth chair next to Lebas. During the sermon all went well between Augustine and Théodore, who, standing behind a pillar, worshiped his Madonna with fervent devotion; but at the elevation of the host, Madame Guillaume discovered, rather late, that her daughter Augustine was holding her prayer-book upside down. She was about to speak to her strongly, when, lowering her veil, she interrupted her own devotions to look in the direction where her daughter's eyes found attraction. By the help of her spectacles she saw the young artist, whose fashionable elegance seemed to proclaim

him a cavalry officer on leave rather than a tradesman of the neighborhood. It is difficult to conceive of the state of violent agitation in which Madame Guillaume found herself—she, who flattered herself on having brought up her daughters to perfection—on discovering in Augustine a clandestine passion of which her prudery and ignorance exaggerated the perils. She believed her daughter to be cankered to the core.

"Hold your book right way up, miss," she muttered in a low voice, tremulous with wrath. She snatched away the tell-tale prayer-book and returned it with the letter-press right side up. "Do not allow your eyes to look anywhere but at your prayers," she added, "or I shall have something to say to you. Your father and I will talk to you after church."

These words came like a thunderbolt on poor Augustine. She felt faint; but, torn between the distress she felt and the dread of causing a commotion in church, she bravely concealed her anguish. It was, however, easy to discern the stormy state of her soul from the trembling of her prayer-book, and the tears which dropped on every page she turned. From the furious glare shot at him by Madame Guillaume the artist saw the peril into which his love affair had fallen; he went out, with a raging soul, determined to venture all.

"Go to your room miss!" said Madame Guillaume, on their return home; "we will send for you, but take care not to quit it."

The conference between the husband and wife was conducted so secretly that at first nothing was heard of it. Virginie, however, who had tried to give her sister courage by a variety of gentle remonstrances, carried her good-nature so far as to listen at the door of her mother's bedroom where the discussion was held, to catch a word or two. The first time she went down to the lower floor she heard her father exclaim: "Then, madame, do you wish to kill your daughter?"

"My poor dear!" said Virginie, in tears, "papa takes your part."

"And what do they want to do to Théodore?" asked the innocent girl.

Virginie, inquisitive, went down again; but this time she stayed longer; she learned that Joseph Lebas loved Augustine. It was written that on this memorable day, this house, generally so peaceful, should be a hell. Monsieur Guillaume brought Joseph Lebas to despair by telling him of Augustine's love for a stranger. Lebas, who had advised his friend to become a suitor for Mademoiselle Virginie, saw all his hopes wrecked. Mademoiselle Virginie, overcome by hearing that Joseph had, in a way, refused her, had a sick headache. The dispute that had arisen from the discussion between Monsieur and Madame Guillaume, when, for the third time in their lives, they had been of antagonistic opinions, had shown itself in a terrible form. Finally, at half-past four in the afternoon, Augustine, pale, trembling, and with red eyes, was haled before her father and mother. The poor child artlessly related the too brief tale of her love. Reassured by a speech from her father, who promised to listen to her in silence, she gathered courage as she pronounced to her parents the name of Théodore de Sommervieux, with a mischievous little emphasis on the aristocratic *de*. And, yielding to the unknown charm of talking of her feelings, she was brave enough to declare with innocent decision that she loved Monsieur de Sommervieux, that she had written to him, and she added, with tears in her eyes: "To sacrifice me to another man would make me wretched."

"But, Augustine, you cannot surely know what a painter is?" cried her mother with horror.

"Madame Guillaume!" said the old man, compelling her to silence. "Augustine," he went on, "artists are generally little better than beggars. They are too extravagant not to be always a bad sort. I served the late Monsieur Joseph Vernet, the late Monsieur Lekain, and the late Monsieur Noverre. Oh, if you could only know the tricks played on

poor Father Chevrel by that Monsieur Noverre, by the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, and especially by Monsieur Philidor! They are a set of rascals; I know them well! They all have a gab and nice manners. Ah, your Monsieur Sumer——, Somm——"

"De Sommervieux, papa."

"Well, well, de Sommervieux, well and good. He can never have been half so sweet to you as Monsieur le Chevalier de Saint-Georges was to me the day I got a verdict of the consuls against him. And in those days they were gentlemen of quality."

"But, father, Monsieur Théodore is of good family, and he wrote me that he is rich; his father was called Chevalier de Sommervieux before the Revolution."

At these words Monsieur Guillaume looked at his terrible better half, who, like an angry woman, sat tapping the floor with her foot while keeping sullen silence; she avoided even casting wrathful looks at Augustine, appearing to leave to Monsieur Guillaume the whole responsibility in so grave a matter, since her opinion was not listened to. Nevertheless, in spite of her apparent self-control, when she saw her husband giving way so mildly under a catastrophe which had no concern with business, she exclaimed—

"Really, monsieur, you are so weak with your daughters! However——"

The sound of a carriage, which stopped at the door, interrupted the rating which the old draper already quaked at. In a minute Madame Roquin was standing in the midde of the room, and looking at the actors in this domestic scene: "I know all, my dear cousin," said she, with a patronizing air.

Madame Roquin made the great mistake of supposing that a Paris notary's wife could play the part of a favorite of fashion.

"I know all," she repeated, "and I have come into Noah's Ark, like the dove, with the olive-branch. I read that alle-

gory in the 'Genius of Christianity,'" she added, turning to Madame Guillaume; "the allusion ought to please you, cousin. Do you know," she went on, smiling at Augustine, "that Monsieur de Sommervieux is a charming man? He gave me my portrait this morning, painted by a master's hand. It is worth at least six thousand francs." And at these words she patted Monsieur Guillaume on the arm. The old draper could not help making a grimace with his lips, which was peculiar to him.

"I know Monsieur de Sommervieux very well," the Dove ran on. "He has come to my evenings these fourteen days past, and made them delightful. He has told me all his woes, and commissioned me to plead for him. I know since this morning that he adores Augustine, and he shall have her. Ah, cousin, do not shake your head in refusal. He will be created baron, I can tell you, and has just been made chevalier of the Legion of Honor, by the Emperor himself, at the Salon. Roquin is now his lawyer, and knows all his affairs. Well! Monsieur de Sommervieux has twelve thousand francs a year in good landed estate. Do you know that the father-in-law of such a man may get a rise in life—be mayor of his arrondissement, for instance. Have we not seen Monsieur Dupont become a count of the Empire and a senator, all because he went as mayor to congratulate the Emperor on his entry into Vienna? Oh, this marriage must take place! For my part, I adore the dear young man. His behavior to Augustine is only met with in romances. Be easy, little one, you shall be happy, and every girl will wish she were in your place. Madame la Duchesse de Carigliano, who comes to my 'At Homes,' raves about Monsieur de Sommervieux. Some spiteful people say she only comes to me to meet him; as if a duchess of yesterday was doing too much honor to a Chevrel, whose family have been respected citizens these hundred years!

"Augustine," Madame Roquin went on, after a short pause, "I have seen the portrait. Heavens! How lovely it is!

Do you know that the Emperor wanted to have it? He laughed, and said to the deputy high constable that if there were many women like that at his court while all the kings visited it, he should have no difficulty about preserving the peace of Europe. Is not that a compliment?"

The tempests with which the day had begun were to resemble those of nature, by ending in clear and serene weather. Madame Roquin displayed so much address in her harangue, she was able to touch so many strings in the dry hearts of Monsieur and Madame Guillaume, that at last she hit on one which she could work upon. At this strange period commerce and finance were more than ever possessed by the crazy mania for seeking alliance with rank; and the generals of the Empire took full advantage of this desire. Monsieur Guillaume, as a singular exception, opposed this deplorable craving. His favorite axioms were that, to secure happiness, a woman must marry a man of her own class; that every one was punished sooner or later for having climbed too high; that love could so little endure under the worries of a household, that both husband and wife needed sound good qualities to be happy; that it would not do for one to be far in advance of the other, because, above everything, they must understand each other; if a man spoke Greek and his wife Latin, they might come to die of hunger. He had himself invented this sort of adage. And he compared such marriages to old-fashioned materials of mixed silk and wool, in which the silk always at last wore through the wool. Still, there is so much vanity at the bottom of man's heart that the prudence of the pilot who steered the Cat and Racket so wisely gave way before Madame Roquin's aggressive volubility. Austere Madame Guillaume was the first to see in her daughter's affection a reason for abdicating her principles and for consenting to receive Monsieur de Sommervieux, whom she promised herself she would put under severe inquisition.

The old draper went to look for Joseph Lebas, and inform

him of the state of affairs. At half-past six, the dining-room immortalized by the artist saw, united under its skylight, Monsieur and Madame Roquin, the young painter and his charming Augustine, Joseph Lebas, who found his happiness in patience, and Mademoiselle Virginie, convalescent from her headache. Monsieur and Madame Guillaume saw in perspective both their children married, and the fortunes of the Cat and Racket once more in skillful hands. Their satisfaction was at its height when, at dessert, Théodore made them a present of the wonderful picture which they had failed to see, representing the interior of the old store, and to which they all owed so much happiness.

"Isn't it pretty!" cried Guillaume. "And to think that any one would pay thirty thousand francs for that!"

"Because you can see my lappets in it," said Madame Guillaume.

"And the cloth unrolled!" added Lebas; "you might take it up in your hand."

"Drapery always comes out well," replied the painter. "We should be only too happy, we modern artists, if we could touch the perfection of antique drapery."

"So you like drapery!" cried old Guillaume. "Well, then, by Gad! shake hands on that, my young friend. Since you can respect trade, we shall understand each other. And why should it be despised? The world began with trade, since Adam sold Paradise for an apple. He did not strike a good bargain though!" And the old man roared with honest laughter, encouraged by the champagne, which he sent round with a liberal hand. The band that covered the young artist's eyes was so thick that he thought his future parents amiable. He was not above enlivening them by a few jests in the best taste. So he, too, pleased every one. In the evening, when the drawing-room, furnished with what Madame Guillaume called "everything handsome," was deserted, and while she flitted from the table to the mantel-piece, from the candelabra

to the tall candlesticks, hastily blowing out the wax-lights, the worthy draper, who was always clear-sighted when money was in question, called Augustine to him, and, seating her on his knee, spoke as follows:

"My dear child, you shall marry your Sommervieux since you insist; you may, if you like, risk your capital in happiness. But I am not going to be hoodwinked by the thirty thousand francs to be made by spoiling good canvas. Money that is lightly earned is lightly spent. Did I not hear that hare-brained youngster declare this evening that money was made round that it might roll. If it is round for spendthrifts, it is flat for saving folk who pile it up. Now, my child, that fine gentleman talks of giving you carriages and diamonds! He has money, let him spend it on you; so be it. It is no concern of mine. But as to what I can give you, I will not have the crown-pieces I have picked up with so much toil wasted in carriages and frippery. Those who spend too fast never grow rich. A hundred thousand crowns, which is your fortune, will not buy up Paris. It is all very well to look forward to a few hundred thousand francs to be yours some day; I shall keep you waiting for them as long as possible, by Gad! So I took your lover aside, and a man who managed the Lecocq bankruptcy had not much difficulty in persuading the artist to marry under a settlement of his wife's money on herself. I will keep an eye on the marriage-contract to see that what he is to settle on you is safely tied up. So now, my child, I hope to be a grandfather, by Gad! I will begin at once to lay up for my grandchildren; but swear to me, here and now, never to sign any papers relating to money without my advice; and if I go soon to join old Father Chevrel, promise to consult young Lebas, your brother-in-law."

"Yes, father, I swear it."

At these words, spoken in a gentle voice, the old man kissed his daughter on both cheeks. That night the lovers slept as soundly as Monsieur and Madame Guillaume.

Some few months after this memorable Sunday the high altar of Saint-Leu was the scene of two very different weddings. Augustine and Théodore appeared in all the radiance of happiness, their eyes beaming with love, dressed with elegance, while a fine carriage waited for them. Virginie, who had come in a good hired fly with the rest of the family, humbly followed her younger sister, dressed in the simplest fashion, like a shadow necessary to the harmony of the picture. Monsieur Guillaume had exerted himself to the utmost in the church to get Virginie married before Augustine, but the priests, high and low, persisted in addressing the more elegant of the two brides. He heard some of his neighbors highly approving the good sense of Mademoiselle Virginie, who was making, as they said, the more substantial match, and remaining faithful to the neighborhood; while they fired a few taunts, prompted by envy of Augustine, who was marrying an artist and a man of rank; adding, with a sort of dismay, that if the Guillaumes were ambitious, there was an end to the business. An old fan-maker having remarked that such a prodigal would soon bring his wife to beggary, Father Guillaume prided himself in secret for his prudence in the matter of marriage-settlements. In the evening, after a splendid ball, followed by one of those substantial suppers of which the memory is dying out in the present generation, Monsieur and Madame Guillaume remained in a fine house belonging to them in the Rue du Colombier, where the wedding had been held; Monsieur and Madame Lebas returned in their hack to the old home in the Rue Saint-Denis, to steer the good ship Cat and Racket. The artist, intoxicated with happiness, carried off his beloved Augustine, and, eagerly lifting her out of their carriage when it reached the Rue des Trois-Frères, led her to an apartment embellished by all the arts.

The fever of passion which possessed Théodore made a year fly over the young couple without a single cloud to dim

the blue sky under which they lived. Life did not hang heavy on the lovers' hands. Théodore lavished on every day inexhaustible witcheries* of enjoyment, and he delighted to vary the transports of passion by the soft languor of those hours of repose when souls soar so high that they seem to have forgotten all bodily union. Augustine was too happy for reflection; she floated on an undulating tide of rapture; she thought she could not do enough by abandoning herself to sanctioned and sacred married love; simple and artless, she had no coquetry, no reserves, none of the dominion which a worldly-minded girl acquires over her husband by ingenious caprice; she loved too well to calculate for the future, and never imagined that so exquisite a life could come to an end. Happy in being her husband's sole delight, she believed that her inextinguishable love would always be her greatest grace in his eyes, as her devotion and obedience would be a perennial charm. And, indeed, the ecstasy of love had made her so brilliantly lovely that her beauty filled her with pride, and gave her confidence that she could always reign over a man so easy to kindle as Monsieur de Sommervieux. Thus her position as a wife brought her no knowledge but the lessons of love.

In the midst of her happiness, she was still the simple child who had lived in obscurity in the Rue Saint-Denis, and she never thought of acquiring the manners, the information, the tone of the world she had to live in. Her words being the words of love, she revealed in them, no doubt, a certain pliancy of mind and a certain refinement of speech; but she used the language common to all women when they find themselves plunged in passion, which seems to be their element. When, by chance, Augustine expressed an idea that did not harmonize with Théodore's, the young artist laughed, as we laugh at the first mistakes of a foreigner, though they end by annoying us if they are not corrected.

* Fioriture.

In spite of all this lovemaking, by the end of this year, as delightful as it was swift, Sommervieux felt one morning the need for resuming his work and his old habits. His wife was expecting their first child. He saw some friends again. During the tedious discomforts of the year when a young wife is nursing an infant for the first time, he worked, no doubt, with zeal, but he occasionally sought diversion in the fashionable world. The house which he was best pleased to frequent was that of the Duchesse de Carigliano, who had at last attracted the celebrated artist to her parties. When Augustine was quite well again, and her boy no longer required the assiduous care which debars a mother from social pleasures, Théodore had come to the stage of wishing to know the joys of satisfied vanity to be found in society by a man who shows himself with a handsome woman, the object of envy and admiration.

To figure in drawing-rooms with the reflected lustre of her husband's fame, and to find other women envious of her, was to Augustine a new harvest of pleasures; but it was the last gleam of conjugal happiness. She first wounded her husband's vanity when, in spite of vain efforts, she betrayed her ignorance, the inelegance of her language, and the narrowness of her ideas. Sommervieux's nature, subjugated for nearly two years and a half by the first transports of love, now, in the calm of less new possession, recovered its bent and habits, for a while diverted from their channel. Poetry, painting, and the subtle joys of imagination have inalienable rights over a lofty spirit. These cravings of a powerful soul had not been starved in Théodore during these two years; they had only found fresh pasture. As soon as the meadows of love had been ransacked, and the artist had gathered roses and cornflowers as the children do, so greedily that he did not see that his hands could hold no more, the scene changed. When the painter showed his wife the sketches for his finest compositions he heard her exclaim, as her father had done: "How pretty!"

This tepid admiration was not the outcome of conscientious feeling, but of her faith on the strength of love.

Augustine cared more for a look than for the finest picture. The only "sublime" she knew was that of the heart. At last Théodore could not resist the evidence of the cruel fact—his wife was insensible to poetry, she did not dwell in his sphere, she could not follow him in all his vagaries, his imaginings, his joys and his sorrows; she walked groveling in the world of reality, while his head was in the skies. Common minds cannot appreciate the perennial sufferings of a being who, while bound to another by the most intimate affection, is obliged constantly to suppress the dearest flights of his soul, and to thrust down into the void those images which a magic power compels him to create. To him the torture is all the more intolerable because his feeling toward his companion enjoins, as its first law, that they should have no concealments, but mingle the aspirations of their thought as perfectly as the effusions of their soul. The demands of nature are not to be cheated. She is as inexorable as necessity, which is, indeed, a sort of social nature. Sommervieux took refuge in the peace and silence of his studio, hoping that the habit of living with artists might mould his wife and develop in her the dormant germs of lofty intelligence which some superior minds suppose must exist in every being. But Augustine was too sincerely religious not to take fright at the tone of artists. At the first dinner Théodore gave, she heard a young painter say, with the childlike lightness, which to her was unintelligible, and which redeems a jest from the taint of profanity, "But, madame, your Paradise cannot be more beautiful than Raphael's Transfiguration! Well, and I got tired of looking at that."

Thus Augustine came among this sparkling set in a spirit of distrust which no one could fail to see. She was a restraint on their freedom. Now an artist who feels restraint is pitiless; he stays away, or laughs it to scorn. Madame Guillaume,

among other absurdities, had an excessive notion of the dignity she considered the prerogative of a married woman; and Augustine, though she had often made fun of it, could not help a slight imitation of her mother's primness. This extreme propriety, which virtuous wives do not always avoid, suggested a few epigrams in the form of sketches, in which the harmless jest was in such good taste that Sommervieux could not take offense; and even if they had been more severe, these pleasantries were after all only reprisals from his friends. Still, nothing could seem a trifle to a spirit so open as Théodore's to impressions from without. A coldness insensibly crept over him, and inevitably spread. To attain conjugal happiness we must climb a hill whose summit is a narrow ridge, close to a steep and slippery descent; the painter's love was falling down this. He regarded his wife as incapable of appreciating the moral considerations which justified him in his own eyes for his singular behavior to her, and believed himself quite innocent in hiding from her the thoughts she could not enter into, and peccadilloes outside the jurisdiction of a bourgeois conscience. Augustine wrapped herself in sullen and silent grief. These unconfessed feelings placed a shroud between the husband and wife which could not fail to grow thicker day by day. Though her husband never failed in consideration for her, Augustine could not help trembling as she saw that he kept for the outer world those treasures of wit and grace that he formerly would lay at her feet. She soon began to find a sinister meaning in the jocular speeches that are current in the world as to the inconstancy of men. She made no complaints, but her demeanor conveyed reproach.

Three years after her marriage this pretty young woman, who dashed past in her handsome carriage, and lived in a sphere of glory and riches to the envy of heedless folk incapable of taking a just view of the situations of life, was a prey to intense grief. She lost her color; she reflected; she made comparisons; then sorrow unfolded to her the first lessons of

experience. She determined to restrict herself bravely within the round of duty, hoping that by this generous conduct she might sooner or later win back her husband's love. But it was not so. When Sommervieux, tired with work, came in from his studio, Augustine did not put her work away so quickly but that the painter might find his wife mending the household linen, and his own, with all the care of a good housewife. She supplied generously and without a murmur the money needed for his lavishness; but in her anxiety to husband her dear Théodore's fortune, she was strictly economical for herself and in certain details of domestic management. Such conduct is incompatible with the easy-going habits of artists, who, at the end of their life, have enjoyed it so keenly that they never inquire into the causes of their ruin.

It is useless to note every tint of shadow by which the brilliant hues of their honeymoon were overcast till they were lost in utter blackness. One evening poor Augustine, who had for some time heard her husband speak with enthusiasm of the Duchesse de Carigliano, received from a friend certain malignantly charitable warnings as to the nature of the attachment which Sommervieux had formed for this celebrated flirt of the Imperial Court. At one-and-twenty, in all the splendor of youth and beauty, Augustine saw herself deserted for a woman of six-and-thirty. Feeling herself so wretched in the midst of a world of festivity which to her was a blank, the poor little thing could no longer understand the admiration she excited, or the envy of which she was the object. Her face assumed a different expression. Melancholy tinged her features with the sweetness of resignation and the pallor of scorned love. Ere long she, too, was courted by the most fascinating men; but she remained lonely and virtuous. Some contemptuous words which escaped her husband filled her with incredible despair. A sinister flash showed her the breaches which, as a result of her sordid education, hindered

the perfect union of her soul with Théodore's; she loved him well enough to absolve him and condemn herself. She shed tears of blood, and perceived, too late, that there are mesalliances of the spirit as well as of rank and habits. As she recalled the early raptures of their union, she understood the full extent of that lost happiness, and accepted the conclusion that so rich a harvest of love was in itself a whole life, which only sorrow could pay for. At the same time, she loved too truly to lose all hope. At one-and-twenty she dared undertake to educate herself, and make her imagination, at least, worthy of that she admired. "If I am not a poet," thought she, "at any rate, I will understand poetry."

Then, with all the strength of will, all the energy which every woman can display when she loves, Madame de Sommervieux tried to alter her character, her manners, and her habits; but by dint of devouring books and learning undauntedly, she only succeeded in becoming less ignorant. Lightness of wit and the graces of conversation are a gift of nature, or the fruit of education begun in the cradle. She could appreciate music and enjoy it, but she could not sing with taste. She understood literature and the beauties of poetry, but it was too late to cultivate her refractory memory. She listened with pleasure to social conversation, but she could contribute nothing brilliant. Her religious notions and home-grown prejudices were antagonistic to the complete emancipation of her intelligence. Finally, a foregone conclusion against her had stolen into Théodore's mind, and this she could not conquer. The artist would laugh at those who flattered him about his wife, and his irony had some foundation; he so overawed the pathetic young creature that, in his presence, or alone with him, she trembled. Hampered by her too eager desire to please, her wits and her knowledge vanished in one absorbing feeling. Even her fidelity vexed the unfaithful husband, who seemed to bid her do wrong by stigmatizing her virtue as insensibility. Augustine tried in

vain to abdicate her reason, to yield to her husband's caprices and whims, to devote herself to the selfishness of his vanity. Her sacrifices bore no fruit. Perhaps they had both let the moment slip when souls may meet in comprehension. One day the young wife's too sensitive heart received one of those blows which so strain the bonds of feeling that they seem to be broken. She withdrew into solitude. But before long a fatal idea suggested to her to seek counsel and comfort in the bosom of her family.

So one morning she made her way toward the grotesque facade of the humble, silent home where she had spent her childhood. She sighed as she looked up at the sash-window, whence one day she had sent her first kiss to him who now shed as much sorrow as glory on her life. Nothing was changed in the cavern, where the drapery business had, however, started on a new life. Augustine's sister filled her mother's old place at the desk. The unhappy young woman met her brother-in-law with his pen behind his ear; he hardly listened to her, he was so full of business. The formidable symptoms of stock-taking were visible all round him; he begged her to excuse him. She was received coldly enough by her sister, who owed her a grudge. In fact, Augustine, in her finery, and stepping out of a handsome carriage, had never been to see her but when passing by. The wife of the prudent Lebas, imagining that want of money was the prime cause of this early call, tried to keep up a tone of reserve which more than once made Augustine smile. The painter's wife perceived that, apart from the cap and lappets, her mother had found in Virginie a successor who could uphold the ancient honor of the Cat and Racket. At breakfast she observed certain changes in the management of the house which did honor to Lebas' good sense; the assistants did not rise before dessert; they were allowed to talk, and the abundant meal spoke of comfort without luxury. The fashionable woman found some tickets for a box at the Français, where she remembered

having seen her sister from time to time. Madame Lebas had a cashmere shawl over her shoulders, of which the value bore witness of her husband's generosity to her. In short, the couple were keeping pace with the times. During the two-thirds of the day she spent there, Augustine was touched to the heart by the equable happiness, devoid, to be sure, of all emotion, but equally free from storms, enjoyed by this well-matched couple. They had accepted life as a commercial enterprise, in which, above all, they must do credit to the business. Not finding any great love in her husband, Virginie had set to work to create it. Having by degrees learned to esteem and care for his wife, the time that this happiness had taken to germinate was to Joseph Lebas a guarantee of its durability. Hence, when Augustine plaintively set forth her painful position, she had to face the deluge of commonplace morality which the traditions of the Rue Saint-Denis furnished to her sister.

"The mischief is done, wife," said Joseph Lebas; "we must try to give our sister good advice." Then the clever tradesman ponderously analyzed the resources which law and custom might offer Augustine as a means of escape at this crisis; he ticketed every argument, so to speak, and arranged them in their degrees of weight under various categories, as though they were articles of merchandise under different qualities; then he put them in the scale, weighed them, and ended by showing the necessity for his sister-in-law taking violent steps which could not satisfy the love she still had for her husband; and, indeed, the feeling had revived in all its strength when she heard Joseph Lebas speak of legal proceedings. Augustine thanked them, and returned home even more undecided than she had been before consulting them. She now ventured to go to the house in the Rue du Colombier, intending to confide her troubles to her father and mother; for she was like a sick man who, in his desperate plight, tries every prescription, and even puts faith in old wives' remedies.

The old people received their daughter with an effusiveness that touched her deeply. Her visit brought them some little change, and that to them was worth a fortune. For the last four years they had gone their way in life like navigators without a goal or a compass. Sitting by the chimney-corner, they would talk over their disasters under the old law of maximum, of their great investments in cloth, of the way they had weathered bankruptcies, and, above all, the famous failure of Lecocq, Monsieur Guillaume's battle of Marengo. Then, when they had exhausted the tale of lawsuits, they recapitulated the sums-total of their most profitable stock-takings, and told each other old stories of the Saint-Denis quarter. At two o'clock old Guillaume went to cast an eye on the business at the Cat and Racket; on his way back he called at all the stores, formerly the rivals of his own, where the young proprietors hoped to inveigle the old draper into some risky discount, which, as was his wont, he never refused point-blank. Two good Normandy horses were dying of their own fat in the stables of the big house; Madame Guillaume never used them but to drag her on Sundays to high mass at the parish church. Three times a week the worthy couple kept open house. By the influence of his son-in-law Sommervieux, Monsieur Guillaume had been named a member of the consulting board for the clothing of the army. Since her husband had stood so high in office, Madame Guillaume had decided that she must receive; her rooms were so crammed with gold and silver ornaments, and furniture, tasteless but of undoubted value, that the simplest room in the house looked like a chapel. Economy and expense seemed to be struggling for the upper hand in every accessory. It was as though Monsieur Guillaume had looked to a good investment, even in the purchase of a candlestick. In the midst of this bazaar, where splendor revealed the owners' want of occupation, Sommervieux's famous picture filled the place of honor, and in it Monsieur and Madame Guillaume found their chief conso-

lation, turning their eyes, harnessed with eye-glasses, twenty times a day on this presentment of their past life, to them so active and amusing. The appearance of this mansion and these rooms, where everything had an aroma of staleness and mediocrity, the spectacle offered by these two beings, cast away, as it were, on a rock far from the world and the ideas which are life, startled Augustine; she could here contemplate the sequel of the scene of which the first part had struck her at the house of Lebas—a life of stir without movement, a mechanical and instinctive existence like that of the beaver; and then she felt an indefinable pride in her troubles, as she reflected that they had their source in eighteen months of such happiness as, in her eyes, was worth a thousand lives like this; its vacuity seemed to her horrible. However, she concealed this not very charitable feeling, and displayed for her parents her newly acquired accomplishments of mind, and the ingratiating tenderness that love had revealed to her, disposing them to listen to her matrimonial grievances. Old people have a weakness for this kind of confidences. Madame Guillaume wanted to know the most trivial details of that alien life, which to her seemed almost fabulous. The travels of Baron de la Houtan, which she began again and again and never finished, told her nothing more unheard-of concerning the Canadian savages.

"What, child, your husband shuts himself into a room with naked women! And you are so simple as to believe that he draws them?"

As she uttered this exclamation, the grandmother laid her spectacles on a little work-table, shook her skirts, and clasped her hands on her knees, raised by a foot-warmer, her favorite pedestal.

"But, mother, all artists are obliged to have models."

"He took good care not to tell us that when he asked leave to marry you. If I had known it, I would never have given my daughter to a man who followed such a trade.

Religion forbids such horrors; they are immoral. And at what time of night do you say he comes home?"

"At one o'clock—two——"

The old couple looked at each other in utter amazement.

"Then he gambles?" said Monsieur Guillaume. "In my day only gamblers stayed out so late."

Augustine made a face that scorned the accusation.

"He must keep you up through dreadful nights waiting for him," said Madame Guillaume. "But you go to bed, don't you? And when he has lost, the wretch wakes you."

"No, mamma, on the contrary, he is sometimes in very good spirits. Not infrequently, indeed, when it is fine, he suggests that I should get up and go into the woods."

"The woods! At that hour? Then have you such a small set of rooms that his bedroom and his sitting-rooms are not enough, and that he must run about? But it is just to give you cold that the wretch proposes such expeditions. He wants to get rid of you. Did one ever hear of a man settled in life, a well-behaved, quiet man, galloping about like a warlock?"

"But, my dear mother, you do not understand that he must have excitement to fire his genius. He is fond of scenes which——"

"I would make scenes for him, fine scenes!" cried Madame Guillaume, interrupting her daughter. "How can you show any consideration to such a man? In the first place, I don't like his drinking water only; it is not wholesome. Why does he object to see a woman eating? What queer notion is that! But he is mad. All you tell us about him is impossible. A man cannot leave his home without a word, and never come back for ten days. And then he tells you he has been to Dieppe to paint the sea. As if any one painted the sea! He crams you with a pack of tales that are too absurd."

Augustine opened her lips to defend her husband; but Madame Guillaume enjoined silence with a wave of her hand,

which she obeyed by a survival of habit, and her mother went on in harsh tones: "Don't talk to me about the man! He never set foot in a church excepting to see you and to be married. People without religion are capable of anything. Did Guillaume ever dream of hiding anything from me, of spending three days without saying a word to me, and of chattering afterward like a blind magpie?"

"My dear mother, you judge superior people too severely. If their ideas were the same as other people's they would not be men of genius."

"Very well, then let men of genius stop at home and not get married. What! A man of genius is to make his wife miserable? And because he is a genius it is all right! Genius, genius! It is not so very clever to say black one minute and white the next, as he does, to interrupt other people, to dance such rigs at home, never to let you know which foot you are to stand on, to compel his wife never to be amused unless my lord is in gay spirits, and to be dull when he is dull."

"But, mother, the very nature of such imaginations——"

"What are such 'imaginations?'" Madame Guillaume went on, interrupting her daughter again. "Fine ones his are, my word! What possesses a man that all on a sudden, without consulting a doctor, he takes it into his head to eat nothing but vegetables? If indeed it were from religious motives, it might do him some good—but he has no more religion than a Huguenot. Was there ever a man known who, like him, loved horses better than his fellow-creatures, had his hair curled like a heathen, placed statues under muslin-covers, closed his shutters in broad day to work by lamplight? There, get along; if he were not so grossly immoral, he would be fit to shut up in a lunatic asylum. Consult Monsieur Loraux, the priest at Saint-Sulpice, ask his opinion about it all, and he will tell you that your husband does not behave like a Christian."

"Oh, mother, can you believe——"

"Yes, I do believe. You loved him, and you can see none of these things. But I can remember in the early days after your marriage. I met him in the Champs-Élysées. He was on horseback. Well, at one minute he was galloping as hard as he could tear, and then pulled up to a walk. I said to myself at that moment, 'There is a man devoid of judgment.'"

"Ah, ha!" cried Monsieur Guillaume, "how wise I was to have your money settled on yourself with such a queer fellow for a husband!"

When Augustine was so imprudent as to set forth her serious grievances against her husband, the two old people were speechless with indignation. But the word "divorce" was ere long spoken by Madame Guillaume. At the sound of the word divorce the apathetic old draper seemed to wake up. Prompted by his love for his daughter, and also by the excitement which the proceedings would bring into his uneventful life, Father Guillaume took up the matter. He made himself the leader of the application for a divorce, laid down the lines of it, almost argued the case; he offered to be at all the charges, to see the lawyers, the pleaders, the judges, to move heaven and earth. Madame de Sommervieux was frightened, she refused her father's services, said she would not be separated from her husband even if she were ten times as unhappy, and talked no more about her sorrows. After being overwhelmed by her parents with all the little wordless and consoling kindnesses by which the old couple tried in vain to make up to her for her distress of heart, Augustine went away, feeling the impossibility of making a superior mind intelligible to weak intellects. She had learned that a wife must hide from every one, even from her parents, woes for which it is so difficult to find sympathy. The storms and sufferings of the upper spheres are appreciated only by the lofty spirits who inhabit there. In every circumstance we can only be judged by our equals.

Thus poor Augustine found herself thrown back on the horror of her meditations, in the cold atmosphere of her home. Study was indifferent to her, since study had not brought her back her husband's heart. Initiated into the secret of these souls of fire, but bereft of their resources, she was compelled to share their sorrows without sharing their pleasures. She was disgusted with the world, which to her seemed mean and small as compared with the incidents of passion. In short, her life was a failure.

One evening an idea flashed upon her that lighted up her dark grief like a beam from heaven. Such an idea could never have smiled on a heart less pure, less virtuous than hers. She determined to go to the Duchesse de Carigliano, not to ask her to give her back her husband's heart, but to learn the arts by which it had been captured; to engage the interest of this haughty fine lady for the mother of her lover's children; to appeal to her and make her the instrument of her future happiness, since she was the cause of her present wretchedness.

So one day Augustine, timid as she was, but armed with supernatural courage, got into her carriage at two in the afternoon to try for admittance to the boudoir of the famous coquette, who was never visible till that hour. Madame de Sommervieux had not yet seen any of the ancient and magnificent mansions of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. As she made her way through the stately corridors, the handsome staircases, the vast drawing-rooms—full of flowers, though it was in the depth of winter, and decorated with the taste peculiar to women born to opulence or to the elegant habits of the aristocracy—Augustine felt a terrible clutch at her heart; she coveted the secrets of an elegance of which she had never had an idea; she breathed an air of grandeur which explained the attraction of the house for her husband. When she reached the private rooms of the duchess she was filled with jealousy and a sort of despair, as she admired the luxurious arrangement of the furniture, the draperies and the hang-

ings. Here disorder was a grace, here luxury affected a certain contempt of splendor. The fragrance that floated in the warm air flattered the sense of smell without offending it. The accessories of the rooms were in harmony with a view, through plate-glass windows, of the lawns in a garden planted with evergreen trees. It was all bewitching, and the art of it was not perceptible. The whole spirit of the mistress of these rooms pervaded the drawing-room where Augustine awaited her. She tried to divine her rival's character from the aspect of the scattered objects; but there was here something, as impenetrable in the disorder as in the symmetry, and to the simple-minded young wife all was a sealed letter. All that she could discern was that, as a woman, the duchess was a superior person. Then a painful thought came over her.

"Alas! And is it true," she wondered, "that a simple and loving heart is not all-sufficient to an artist; that to balance the weight of these powerful souls they need a union with feminine souls of a strength equal to their own? If I had been brought up like this siren, our weapons at least might have been equal in the hour of struggle."

"But I am not at home!" The sharp, harsh words, though spoken in an undertone in the adjoining boudoir, were heard by Augustine, and her heart beat violently.

"The lady is in there," replied the maid.

"You are an idiot! Show her in," replied the duchess, whose voice was sweeter, and had assumed the dulcet tones of politeness. She evidently now meant to be heard.

Augustine shyly entered the room. At the end of the dainty boudoir she saw the duchess lounging luxuriously on an ottoman covered with brown velvet and placed in the centre of a sort of apse outlined by soft folds of white lawn over a yellow lining. Ornaments of gilt bronze, arranged with exquisite taste, enhanced this sort of daïs, under which the duchess reclined like a Greek statue. The dark hue of the velvet gave relief to every fascinating charm. A subdued

light, friendly to her beauty, fell like a reflection rather .han a direct illumination. A few rare flowers raised their perfumed heads from costly Sèvres vases. At the moment when this picture was presented to Augustine's astonished eyes, she was approaching so noiselessly that she caught a glance from those of the enchantress. This look seemed to say to some one whom Augustine did not at first perceive, "Stay; you will see a pretty woman, and make her visit less of a bore."

On seeing Augustine, the duchess rose and made her sit down by her.

"And to what do I owe the pleasure of this visit, madame?" she said with a most gracious smile.

"Why all this falseness?" thought Augustine, replying only with a bow.

Her silence was compulsory. The young woman saw before her a superfluous witness of the scene. This personage was, of all the colonels in the army, the youngest, the most fashionable, and the finest man. His face, full of life and youth, but already expressive, was further enhanced by a small mustache twirled up into points, and as black as jet, by a full imperial, by whiskers carefully combed, and a forest of black hair in some disorder. He was whisking a riding-whip with an air of ease and freedom which suited his self-satisfied expression and the elegance of his dress; the ribbons attached to his button-hole were carelessly tied, and he seemed to pride himself much more on his smart appearance than on his courage. Augustine looked at the Duchesse de Carigliano, and indicated the colonel by a sidelong glance. All its mute appeal was understood.

"Good-by then, Monsieur d'Aiglemont, we shall meet in the Bois de Boulogne."

These words were spoken by the siren as though they were the result of an agreement made before Augustine's arrival, and she winged them with a threatening look that the officer deserved, perhaps, for the admiration he showed in gazing

at the modest flower, which contrasted so well with the haughty duchess. The young fop bowed in silence, turned on the heels of his boots, and gracefully quitted the boudoir. At this instant, Augustine, watching her rival, whose eyes seemed to follow the brilliant officer, detected in that glance a sentiment of which the transient expression is known to every woman. She perceived with the deepest anguish that her visit would be useless; this lady, full of artifice, was too greedy of homage not to have a ruthless heart.

"Madame," said Augustine in a broken voice, "the step I am about to take will seem to you very strange; but there is a madness of despair which ought to excuse anything. I understand only too well why Théodore prefers your house to any other, and why your mind has so much power over his. Alas! I have only to look into myself to find more than ample reasons. But I am devoted to my husband, madame. Two years of tears have not effaced his image from my heart, though I have lost his. In my folly I dared to dream of a contest with you; and I have come to you to ask you by what means I may triumph over yourself. Oh, madame," cried the young wife, ardently seizing the hand which her rival allowed her to hold, "I will never pray to God for my own happiness with so much fervor as I will beseech Him for yours, if you will help me to win back Sommervieux's regard—I will not say his love. I have no hope but in you. Ah! tell me how you could please him, and make him forget the first days——" At these words Augustine broke down, suffocated with sobs she could not suppress. Ashamed of her weakness, she hid her face in her handkerchief, which she bathed with tears. "What a child you are, my dear little beauty!" said the duchess, carried away by the novelty of such a scene, and touched, in spite of herself, at receiving such homage from the most perfect virtue perhaps in Paris. She took the young wife's handkerchief, and herself wiped the tears from her eyes, soothing her by a few monosyllables murmured with gracious

compassion. After a moment's silence the duchess, grasping poor Augustine's hands in both her own—hands that had a rare character of dignity and powerful beauty—said in a gentle and friendly voice: "My first warning is to advise you not to weep so bitterly; tears are disfiguring. We must learn to deal firmly with the sorrows that make us ill, for love does not linger long by a sickbed. Melancholy, at first, no doubt, lends a certain attractive grace, but it ends by dragging the features and blighting the loveliest face. And, beside, our tyrants are so vain as to insist that their slaves should be always cheerful."

"But, madame, it is not in my power not to feel. How is it possible, without suffering a thousand deaths, to see the face which once beamed with love and gladness turn chill, colorless, and indifferent? I cannot control my heart!"

"So much the worse, sweet child. But I fancy I know all your story. In the first place, if your husband is unfaithful to you, understand clearly that I am not his accomplice. If I was anxious to have him in my drawing-room, it was, I own, out of vanity; he was famous, and he went nowhere. I like you too much already to tell you all the mad things he has done for my sake. I will only reveal one, because it may perhaps help us to bring him back to you, and to punish him for the audacity of his behavior to me. He will end by compromising me. I know the world too well, my dear, to abandon myself to the discretion of a too superior man. You should know that one may allow them to court one, but marry them—that is a mistake! We women ought to admire men of genius, and delight in them as a spectacle, but as to living with them? Never. No, no. It is like wanting to find pleasure in inspecting the machinery of the opera instead of sitting in a box to enjoy its brilliant illusions. But this misfortune has fallen on you, my poor child, has it not? Well, then, you must try to arm yourself against tyranny."

"Ah, madame, before coming in here, only seeing you as

I came in, I already detected some arts of which I had no suspicion."

"Well, come and see me sometimes, and it will not be long before you have mastered the knowledge of these trifles, important, too, in their way. Outward things are, to fools, half of life; and in that matter more than one clever man is a fool, in spite of all his talent. But I dare wager you never could refuse your Théodore anything!"

"How refuse anything, madame, if one loves a man?"

"Poor innocent, I could adore you for your simplicity. You should know that the more we love the less we should allow a man, above all, a husband, to see the whole extent of our passion. The one who loves most is tyrannized over, and, which is worse, is sooner or later neglected. The one who wishes to rule should——"

"What, madame, must I then dissimulate, calculate, become false, form an artificial character, and live in it? How is it possible to live in such a way? Can you——" she hesitated; the duchess smiled.

"My dear child," the great lady went on in a serious tone, "conjugal happiness has in all times been a speculation, a business demanding particular attention. If you persist in talking passion while I am talking marriage, we shall soon cease to understand each other. Listen to me," she went on, assuming a confidential tone. "I have been in the way of seeing some of the superior men of our day. Those who have married have for the most part chosen quite insignificant wives. Well, those wives governed them, as the Emperor governs us; and if they were not loved, they were at least respected. I like secrets—especially those which concern women—well enough to have amused myself by seeking the clue to the riddle. Well, my sweet child, those worthy women had the gift of analyzing their husbands' nature; instead of taking fright, like you, at their superiority, they very acutely noted the qualities they lacked, and either by

possessing those qualities, or by feigning to possess them, they found means of making such a handsome display of them in their husbands' eyes that in the end they impressed them. Also, I must tell you, all these souls which appear so lofty have just a speck of madness in them, which we ought to know how to take advantage of. By firmly resolving to have the upper hand and never deviating from that aim, by bringing all our actions to bear on it, all our ideas, our cajolery, we subjugate these eminently capricious natures, which, by the very mutability of their thoughts, lend us the means of influencing them."

"Good heavens!" cried the young wife in dismay. "And this is life. It is a warfare——"

"In which we must always threaten," said the duchess, laughing. "Our power is wholly factitious. And we must never allow a man to despise us; it is impossible to recover from such a descent but by odious manœuvring. Come," she added, "I will give you a means of bringing your husband to his senses."

She rose with a smile to guide the young and guileless apprentice to conjugal arts through the labyrinth of her palace. They came to a back staircase, which led up to the reception-rooms. As Madame de Carigliano pressed the secret spring-lock of the door she stopped, looking at Augustine with an inimitable gleam of shrewdness and grace. "The Duc de Carigliano adores me," said she. "Well, he dare not enter by this door without my leave. And he is a man in the habit of commanding thousands of soldiers. He knows how to face a battery, but before me—he is afraid!"

Augustine sighed. They entered a sumptuous gallery, where the painter's wife was led by the duchess up to the portrait painted by Théodore of Mademoiselle Guillaume. On seeing it, Augustine uttered a cry.

"I knew it was no longer in my house," she said, "but—here!——"

"My dear child, I asked for it merely to see to what pitch of idiocy a man of genius may attain. Sooner or later I should have returned it to you, for I never expected the pleasure of seeing the original here face to face with the copy. While we finish our conversation I will have it carried down to your carriage. And if, armed with such a talisman, you are not your husband's mistress for a hundred years, you are not a woman, and you deserve your fate."

Augustine kissed the duchess' hand, and the lady clasped her to her heart, with all the more tenderness because she would forget her by the morrow. This scene might, perhaps, have destroyed for ever the candor and purity of a less virtuous woman than Augustine, for the astute politics of the higher social spheres were no more consonant to Augustine than the narrow reasoning of Joseph Lebas, or Madame Guillaume's vapid morality. Strange are the results of the false positions into which we may be brought by the slightest mistake in the conduct of life! Augustine was like an Alpine cowherd surprised by an avalanche; if he hesitates, if he listens to the shouts of his comrades, he is almost certainly lost. In such a crisis the heart steels itself or breaks.

Madame de Sommervieux returned home a prey to such agitation as it is difficult to describe. Her conversation with the Duchesse de Carigliano had roused in her mind a crowd of contradictory thoughts. Like the sheep in the fable, full of courage in the wolf's absence, she preached to herself, and laid down admirable plans of conduct; she devised a thousand coquettish stratagems; she even talked to her husband, finding, away from him, all the springs of true eloquence which never desert a woman; then, as she pictured to herself Théodore's clear and steadfast gaze, she began to quake. When she asked whether monsieur were at home her voice shook. On learning that he would not be in to dinner, she felt an unaccountable thrill of joy. Like a criminal who has appealed against sentence of death, a respite, however short, seemed to her a life-

time. She placed the portrait in her room, and waited for her husband in all the agonies of hope. That this venture must decide her future life, she felt too keenly not to shiver at every sound, even the low ticking of the clock, which seemed to aggravate her terrors by doling them out to her. She tried to cheat time by various devices. The idea struck her of dressing in a way which would make her exactly like the portrait. Then, knowing her husband's restless temper, she had her room lighted up with unusual brightness, feeling sure that when he came in curiosity would bring him there at once. Midnight had struck when, at the call of the groom, the street gate was opened, and the artist's carriage rumbled in over the stones of the silent courtyard.

"What is the meaning of this illumination?" asked Théodore in glad tones as he came into her room.

Augustine skillfully seized the auspicious moment; she threw herself into her husband's arms, and pointed to the portrait. The artist stood rigid as a rock, and his eyes turned alternately on Augustine, on the accusing dress. The frightened wife, half-dead, as she watched her husband's changeful brow —that terrible brow—saw the expressive furrows gathering like clouds; then she felt her blood curdling in her veins when, with a glaring look and in a deep, hollow voice, he began to question her—

"Where did you find that picture?"

"The Duchesse de Carigliano returned it to me," replied Augustine.

"You asked her for it?"

"I did not know that she had it."

The gentleness, or rather the exquisite sweetness of this angel's voice, might have touched a cannibal, but not an artist in the clutches of wounded vanity.

"It is worthy of her!" exclaimed the painter in a voice of thunder. "I will be revenged!" he cried, striding up and down the room. "She shall die of shame; I will paint her!

Yes, I will paint her as Messalina stealing out at night from the palace of Claudius."

"Théodore!" said a faint voice.

"I will kill her!"

"My dear——"

"She is in love with that little cavalry colonel, because he rides well——"

"Théodore!

"Let me be!" said the painter in a tone almost like a roar.

It would be odious to describe the whole scene. In the end the frenzy of passion prompted the artist to acts and words which any woman not so young as Augustine would have ascribed to madness.

At eight o'clock next morning Madame Guillaume, surprising her daughter, found her pale, with red eyes, her hair in disorder, holding a handkerchief soaked with tears, while she gazed at the floor strewn with the torn fragments of a dress and the broken pieces of a large gilt picture-frame. Augustine, almost senseless with grief, pointed to the wreck with a gesture of deep despair.

"I don't know that the loss is very great!" cried the old mistress of the Cat and Racket. "It was like you, no doubt; but I am told that there is a man on the boulevard who paints lovely portraits for fifty crowns."

"Oh, mother!"

"Poor child, you are quite right," replied Madame Guillaume, who misinterpreted the expression of her daughter's glance at her. "True, my child, no one ever can love you as fondly as a mother. My darling, I guess it all; but confide your sorrows to me, and I will comfort you. Did I not tell you long ago that the man was mad! Your maid has told me pretty stories. Why, he must be a perfect monster!"

Augustine laid a finger on her white lips, as if to implore a moment's silence. During this dreadful night misery had led her to that patient resignation which in mothers and loving

wives transcends in its effects all human energy, and perhaps reveals in the heart of women the existence of certain chords which God has withheld from men.

An inscription engraved on a broken column in the cemetery at Montmartre states that Madame de Sommervieux died at the age of twenty-seven. In the simple words of this epitaph one of the timid creature's friends can read the last scene of a tragedy. Every year, on the second of November, All-Souls' Day, the solemn day of the dead, he never passes this monument to youth without wondering whether it does not need a stronger woman than Augustine to endure the violent embrace of genius?

"The humble and modest flowers that bloom in the valley," he reflects, "perish, perhaps, when they are transplanted too near the skies, to the region where storms gather and the sun is scorching."

THE FIRM OF NUCINGEN

(*La Maison Nucingen*).

Translated by ELLEN MARRIAGE.

To Madame Zulma Carraud.

To whom, madame, but to you should I inscribe this work; to you whose lofty and candid intellect is a treasury to your friends; to you that are to me not only a whole public, but the most indulgent of sisters as well? Will you deign to accept a token of the friendship of which I am proud? You, and some few souls as noble, will grasp the whole of the thought underlying The Firm of Nucingen, *appended to* César Birotteau. *Is there not a whole social lesson in the contrast between the two stories?*

DE BALZAC.

YOU know how slight the partitions are between the private rooms of fashionable restaurants in Paris; Véry's largest room, for instance, is cut in two by a removable screen. This Scene is *not* laid at Véry's, but in snug quarters, which for reasons of my own I forbear to specify. We were two, so I will say, like Henri Monnier's Prudhomme, "I should not like to compromise *her!*"

We had remarked the want of solidity in the wall-structure, so we talked with lowered voices as we sat together in the little private room, lingering over the dainty dishes of a dinner exquisite in more senses than one. We had come as far as the roast, however, and still we had no neighbors; no sound came from the next room save the crackling of the fire. But when the clock struck eight, we heard voices and noisy footsteps; the waiters brought candles. Evidently there was a

party assembled in the next room, and at the first words I knew at once with whom we had to do—four bold cormorants as ever sprang from the foam on the crests of the ever-rising waves of this present generation—four pleasant young fellows whose existence was problematical, since they were not known to possess either stock or landed estates, yet they lived, and lived well. These ingenious *condottieri* (mercenary soldiers) of a modern industrialism, that has come to be the most ruthless of all warfares, leave anxieties to their creditors and keep the pleasures for themselves. They are careful for nothing, save dress. Still, with courage of the Jean Bart order, that will smoke cigars on a barrel of powder (perhaps by way of keeping up their character), with a quizzing humor that outdoes the minor newspapers, sparing no one, not even themselves; clear-sighted, wary, keen after business, grasping yet open-handed, envious yet self-complacent, profound politicians by fits and starts, analyzing everything, guessing everything—not one of these in question had as yet contrived to make his way in the world which they chose for their scene of operations. Only one of the four, indeed, had succeeded in coming as far as the foot of the ladder.

To have money is nothing; the self-made man only finds out all that he lacks after six months of flatteries. Andoche Finot, the self-made man in question, stiff, taciturn, cold, and dull-witted, possessed the sort of spirit which will not shrink from groveling before any creature that may be of use to him, and the cunning to be insolent when he needs a man no longer. Like one of the grotesque figures in the ballet in "Gustave," he was a marquis behind, a boor in front. And this high-priest of commerce had a following.

Émile Blondet, journalist, with abundance of intellectual power, reckless, brilliant, and indolent, could do anything that he chose, yet he submitted to be exploited with his eyes open. Treacherous or kind upon impulse, a man to love, but not to respect; quick-witted as a *soubrette*, unable to refuse

his pen to any one that asked, or his heart to the first that would borrow it, Émile was the most fascinating of those light-of-loves of whom a fantastic and brilliant modern wit declared that "he liked them better in satin slippers than in boots."

The third in the party, Couture by name, lived by speculation, grafting one affair upon another to make the gains pay for the losses. He was always between wind and water, keeping himself afloat by his bold, sudden strokes and the nervous energy of his play. Hither and thither he would swim over the vast sea of interests in Paris, in quest of some little isle that should be so far a debatable land that he might abide upon it. Clearly Couture was not in his proper place.

As for the fourth and most malicious personage, his name will be enough—it was Bixiou! Not (alas!) the Bixiou of 1825, but the Bixiou of 1836, a misanthropic buffoon, acknowledged supreme, by reason of his energetic and caustic wit; a very fiend let loose now that he saw how he had squandered his intellect in pure waste; a Bixiou vexed by the thought that he had not come by his share of the wreckage in the last Revolution; a Bixiou with a kick for every one, like Pierrot at the Funambules. Bixiou had the whole history of his own times at his finger-ends, more particularly its scandalous chronicle, embellished by added waggeries of his own. He sprang like a clown upon everybody's back, only to do his utmost to leave the executioner's brand upon every pair of shoulders.

The first cravings of gluttony satisfied, our neighbors reached the stage at which we also had arrived, to wit, the dessert; and, as we made no sign, they believed that they were alone. Thanks to the champague, the talk grew confidential as they dallied with the dessert amid the cigar smoke. Yet through it all you felt the influence of the icy shade that leaves the most spontaneous feeling frost-bound and stiff, that checks the most generous inspirations, and gives a sharp ring to the

laughter. Their table-talk was full of the bitter irony which turns a jest into a sneer; it told of the exhaustion of souls given over to themselves; of lives with no end in view but the satisfaction of self—of egoism induced by these times of peace in which we live. I can think of nothing like it save a pamphlet against mankind at large which Diderot was afraid to publish, a book that bares man's breast simply to expose the plague-sores upon it. We listened to just such a pamphlet as "Rameau's Nephew," spoken aloud in all good faith, in the course of after-dinner talk, in which nothing, not even the point which the speaker wished to carry, was sacred from epigram; nothing taken for granted, nothing built up except upon ruins, nothing reverenced save the skeptic's adopted article of belief—the omnipotence, omniscience, and universal applicability of money.

After some target practice at the outer circle of their acquaintances, they turned their ill-natured shafts at their intimate friends. With a sign I explained my wish to stay and listen as soon as Bixiou took up his parable, as will shortly be seen. And so we listened to one of those terrific improvisations which won that artist such a name among a certain set of seared and jaded spirits; and often interrupted and resumed though it was, memory serves me as a reporter of it. The opinions expressed and the form of expression lie alike outside the conditions of literature. It was, more properly speaking, a medley of sinister revelations that paint our age, to which indeed no other kind of story should be told; and, beside, I throw all the responsibility upon the principal speaker. The pantomime and the gestures that accompanied Bixiou's changes of voice, as he acted the parts of the various persons, must have been perfect, judging by the applause and admiring comments that broke from his audience of three.

"Then did Rastignac refuse?" asked Blondet, apparently addressing Finot.

"Point-blank."

"But did you threaten him with the newspapers?" asked Bixiou.

"He began to laugh," returned Finot.

"Rastignac is the late lamented de Marsay's direct heir; he will make his way politically as well as socially," commented Blondet.

"But how did he make his money?" asked Couture. "In 1819 both he and the illustrious Bianchon lived in a shabby boarding-house in the Latin quarter;* his people ate roast cockchafers and drank their own wine so as to send him a hundred francs every month. His father's property was not worth a thousand crowns; he had two sisters and a brother on his hands, and now——"

"Now he has an income of forty thousand livres," continued Finot; "his sisters had a handsome fortune apiece and married into noble families; he leaves his mother a life-interest in the property——"

"Even in 1827 I have known him without a penny," said Blondet.

"Oh! in 1827," said Bixiou.

"Well," resumed Finot, "yet to-day, as we see, he is in a fair way to be a minister, a peer of France—anything that he likes. He broke decently with Delphine three years ago; he will not marry except on good grounds; and he may marry a girl of noble family. The chap had the sense to take up with a wealthy woman."

"My friends, give him the benefit of extenuating circumstances," urged Blondet. "When he escaped the clutches of want, he dropped into the claws of a very clever man."

"You know what Nucingen is," said Bixiou. "In the early days, Delphine and Rastignac thought him 'good-natured;' he seemed to regard a wife as a plaything, an ornament in his house. And that very fact showed me that the man was square at the base as well as in height," added Bixiou.

* See "Father Goriot."

"Nucingen makes no bones about admitting that his wife is his fortune; she is an indispensable chattel, but a wife takes a secondary place in the high-pressure life of a political leader and great capitalist. He once said in my hearing that Bonaparte had blundered like a bourgeois in his early relations with Josephine; and that after he had had the spirit to use her as a stepping-stone, he had made himself ridiculous by trying to make a companion of her."

"Any man of unusual powers is bound to take Oriental views of women," said Blondet.

"The baron blended the opinions of East and West in a charming Parisian creed; he abhorred de Marsay; de Marsay was unmanageable; but with Rastignac he was much pleased; he exploited him, though Rastignac was not aware of it. All the burdens of married life were put on him. Rastignac bore the brunt of Delphine's whims; he escorted her to the Bois de Boulogne; he went with her to the play; and the little politician and great man of to-day spent a good deal of his life at that time in writing dainty notes. Eugène was scolded for little nothings from the first; he was in good spirits when Delphine was cheerful, and drooped when she felt low; he bore the weight of her confidences and her ailments; he gave up his time, the hours of his precious youth, to fill the empty void of that fair Parisian's idleness. Delphine and he held high councils on the toilettes which went best together; he stood the fire of bad temper and broadsides of pouting fits, while she, by way of trimming the balance, was very nice to the baron. As for the baron, he laughed in his sleeve; but whenever he saw that Rastignac was bending under the strain of the burden, he made 'as if he suspected something,' and reunited the lovers by a common dread."

"I can imagine that a wealthy wife would have put Rastignac in the way of a living, and an honorable living, but where did he pick up his fortune?" asked Couture. "A fortune so considerable as his at the present day must come

from somewhere; and nobody ever accused him of inventing a good stroke of business."

"Somebody left it to him," said Finot.

"Who?" asked Blondet.

"Some fool that he came across," suggested Couture.

"He did not steal the whole of it, my little dears," said Bixiou.

"Let not your terrors rise to fever-heat,
Our age is lenient with those that cheat.

Now, I will tell you about the beginnings of his fortune. In the first place, honor to talent! Our friend is not a 'chap,' as Finot describes him, but a gentleman in the English sense, who knows the cards and knows the game; whom, moreover, the gallery respects. Rastignac has quite as much intelligence as is needed at a given moment, as if a soldier should make his courage payable at ninety days' sight, with three witnesses and guarantees. He may seem captious, wrong-headed, inconsequent, vacillating, and without any fixed opinions; but let something serious turn up, some combination to scheme out, he will not scatter himself like Blondet here, who chooses these occasions to look at things from his neighbor's point of view. Rastignac concentrates himself, pulls himself together, looks for the point to carry by storm, and goes full tilt for it. He charges like a Murat, breaks squares, pounds away at shareholders, promoters, and the whole crowd, and returns, when the breach is made, to his lazy, careless life. Once more he becomes the man of the South, the man of pleasure, the trifling, idle Rastignac. He has earned the right of lying in bed till noon because a crisis never finds him asleep."

"So far so good, but just get to his fortune," said Finot.

"Bixiou will dash that off at a stroke," replied Blondet. "Rastignac's fortune was Delphine de Nucingen, a remarkable woman; she combines boldness with foresight."

"Did she ever lend you money?" inquired Bixiou. Everybody burst out laughing.

"You are mistaken in her," said Couture, speaking to Blondet; "her cleverness simply consists in making more or less piquant remarks, in loving Rastignac with tedious fidelity, and obeying him blindly. She is a regular Italian."

"Money apart," Andoche Finot put in sourly.

"Oh, come, come," said Bixiou coaxingly; "after what we have just been saying, will you venture to blame poor Rastignac for living at the expense of the firm of Nucingen, for being installed in furnished rooms precisely as La Torpille was once installed by our friend des Lupeaulx? You would sink to the vulgarity of the Rue Saint-Denis! First of all, 'in the abstract,' as Royer-Collard says, the question may abide the 'Kritik of Pure Reason;' as for the impure reason that——"

"There he goes!" said Finot, turning to Blondet.

"But there is reason in what he says," exclaimed Blondet. "The problem is a very old one; it was the grand secret of the famous duel between La Chataigneraie and Jarnac. It was cast up to Jarnac that he was on good terms with his mother-in-law, who, loving him only too well, equipped him sumptuously. When a thing is so true, it ought not to be said. Out of devotion to Henry II., who permitted himself this slander, La Chataigneraie took it upon himself, and there followed the duel which enriched the French language with the expression *coup de Jarnac*."

"Oh! does it go so far back? Then it is noble?" said Finot.

"As proprietor of newspapers and reviews of old standing, you are not bound to know that," said Blondet.

"There are women," Bixiou gravely resumed, "and for that matter, men too, who can cut their lives in two and give away but one-half. (Remark how I word my phrase for you in humanitarian language.) For these, all material interests

lie without the range of sentiment. They give their time, their life, their honor to a woman, and hold that between themselves it is not the thing to meddle with bits of tissue paper bearing the legend, '*Forgery is punishable with death.*' And equally they will take nothing from a woman. Yes, the whole thing is debased if fusion of interests follows on fusion of souls. This is a doctrine much preached, and very seldom practiced."

"Oh, what rubbish!" cried Blondet. "The Maréchal de Richelieu understood something of gallantry, and he settled an allowance of a thousand louis d'or on Madame de la Popelinière after that affair of the hiding-place behind the hearth. Agnes Sorel, in all simplicity, took her fortune to Charles VII., and the King accepted it. Jacques Cœur kept the crown for France; he was allowed to do it, and, woman-like, France was ungrateful."

"Gentlemen," said Bixiou, "a love that does not imply an indissoluble friendship, to my thinking, is momentary libertinage. What sort of entire surrender is it that keeps something back? Between these two diametrically opposed doctrines, the one as profoundly immoral as the other, there is no possible compromise. It seems to me that any shrinking from a complete union is surely due to a belief that the union cannot last, and if so, farewell to illusion. The passion that does not believe that it will last forever is a hideous thing. (Here is pure unadulterated Fénelon for you!) At the same time, those who know the world, the observer, the man of the world, the wearers of irreproachable gloves and ties, the men who do not blush to marry a woman for her money, proclaim the necessity of a complete separation of sentiment and interest. The other sort are lunatics that love and imagine that they and the woman they love are the only two beings in the world; for them millions are dirt; the glove or the camellia flower that She wore is worth millions. If the squandered filthy lucre is never to be found again in their possession, you

find the remains of floral relics hoarded in dainty cedar-wood boxes. They cannot distinguish themselves one from the other; for them there is no 'I' left. *Thou*—that is their Word made flesh. What can you do? Can you stop the course of this 'hidden disease of the heart?' There are fools that love without calculation, and wise men that calculate while they love."

"To my thinking Bixiou is sublime," cried Blondet. "What does Finot say to it?"

"Anywhere else," said Finot, drawing himself up in his cravat, "anywhere else, I should say, with the 'gentlemen;' but here, I think——"

"With the scoundrelly scapegraces with whom you have the honor to associate?" said Bixiou.

"Upon my word, yes."

"And you?" asked Bixiou, turning to Couture.

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried Couture. "The woman that will not make a stepping-stone of her body, that the man she singles out may reach his goal, is a woman that has no heart except for her own purposes."

"And you, Blondet?"

"I do not preach, I practice."

"Very good," rejoined Bixiou in his most ironical tones. "Rastignac was not of your way of thinking. To take without repaying is detestable, and even rather bad form; but to take that you may render a hundredfold, like the Lord, is a chivalrous deed. This was Rastignac's view. He felt profoundly humiliated by his community of interests with Delphine de Nucingen; I can tell you that he regretted it; I have seen him deploring his position with tears in his eyes. Yes, he shed tears, he did, indeed—after supper. Well, now to *our* way of thinking——"

"I say, you are laughing at us," said Finot.

"Not the least in the world. We were talking of Rastignac. From your point of view his affliction would be a sign of his

corruption; for by that time he was not nearly so much in love with Delphine. What would you have? he felt the prick in his heart, poor fellow. But he was a man of noble descent and profound depravity, whereas we are virtuous artists. So Rastignac meant to enrich Delphine; he was a poor man, she a rich woman. Would you believe it? he succeeded. Rastignac, who might have fought at need, like Jarnac, went over to the opinion of Henri II. on the strength of his great maxim, 'There is no such thing as absolute right; there are only circumstances.' This brings us to the history of his fortune."

"You might just as well make a start with your story instead of drawing us on to traduce ourselves," said Blondet with urbane good-humor.

"Aha! my boy," returned Bixiou, administering a little tap to the back of Blondet's head, "you are making up for lost time over the champagne!"

"Oh! by the sacred name of shareholder, get on with your story!" cried Couture.

"I was within an ace of it," retorted Bixiou, "but you with your profanity have brought me to the climax."

"Then, are there shareholders in the tale?" inquired Finot.

"Yes; rich as rich can be—like yours."

"It seems to me," Finot began stiffly, "that some consideration is owing to a good fellow to whom you look for a bill for five hundred francs upon occasion——"

"Waiter!" called Bixiou.

"What do you want with the waiter?" asked Blondet.

"I want five hundred francs to repay Finot, so that I can tear up my I. O. U. and set my tongue free."

"Get on with your story," said Finot, making believe to laugh.

"I take you all to witness that I am not the property of this insolent fellow, who fancies that my silence is worth no more

than five hundred francs. You will never be a minister if you cannot gauge people's consciences. There, my good Finot," he added soothingly, "I will get on with my story without personalities, and we shall be quits."

"Now," said Couture with a smile, "he will begin to prove for our benefit that Nucingen made Rastignac's fortune."

"You are not so far out as you think," returned Bixiou. "You do not know what Nucingen is, financially speaking."

"Do you know so much as a word as to his beginnings?" asked Blondet.

"I have only known him in his own house," said Bixiou, "but we may have seen each other in the street in the old days."

"The prosperity of the firm of Nucingen is one of the most extraordinary things seen in our days," began Blondet. "In 1804 Nucingen's name was scarcely known. At that time bankers would have shuddered at the idea of three hundred thousand francs' worth of his acceptances in the market. The great capitalist felt his inferiority. How was he to get known? He suspended payment. Good! Every market rang with a name hitherto only known in Strasbourg and the Quartier Poissonnière. He issued deposit certificates to his creditors, and resumed payment; forthwith people grew accustomed to his paper all over France. Then an unheard-of thing happened—his paper revived, was in demand, and rose in value. Nucingen's paper was much inquired for. The year 1815 arrives, my banker calls in his capital, buys up Government stock before the battle of Waterloo, suspends payment again in the thick of the crisis, and meets his engagements with shares in the Wortschin mines, which he himself issued at twenty per cent. more than he gave for them! Yes, gentlemen! He took a hundred and fifty thousand bottles of champagne of Grandet to cover himself (foreseeing the failure of the virtuous parent of the present Comte d'Aubrion), and as much Bordeaux wine of Duberghe at the same time. Those three hun-

dred thousand bottles which he took over (and took over at thirty sous apiece, my dear boy), he supplied at the price of six francs per bottle to the Allies in the Palais Royal during the foreign occupation between 1817 and 1819. Nucingen's name and his paper acquired a European celebrity. The illustrious baron, so far from being engulfed like others, rose the higher for calamities. Twice his arrangements had paid holders of his paper uncommonly well; *he* try to swindle them? Impossible. He is supposed to be as honest a man as you will find. When he suspends payment a third time, his paper will circulate in Asia, Mexico, and Australia, among the aborigines. No one but Ouvrard saw through this Alsacian banker, the son of some Jew or other converted by ambition; Ouvrard said, 'When Nucingen lets gold go, you may be sure that it is to catch diamonds.' "

"His crony, du Tillet, is just such another," said Finot. "And, mind you, that of birth du Tillet has just precisely so much as is necessary to exist; the chap had not a farthing in 1814, and you see what he is now; and he has done something that none of us has managed to do (I am not speaking of you, Couture), he has had friends instead of enemies. In fact, he has kept his past life so quiet, that unless you rake the sewers you are not likely to find out that he was an assistant in a perfumer's shop in the Rue Saint-Honoré, no further back than 1814."*

"Tut, tut, tut!" said Bixiou, "do not think of comparing Nucingen with a little dabbler like du Tillet, a jackal that gets on in life through his sense of smell. He scents a carcase by instinct, and comes in time to get the best bone. Beside, just look at the two men. The one has a sharp-pointed face like a cat, he is thin and lanky; the other is cubical, fat, heavy as a sack, imperturbable as a diplomatist. Nucingen has a thick, heavy hand, and lynx eyes that never light up; his depths are not in front, but behind; he is inscrutable,

* See "César Birotteau."

you never see what he is making for. Whereas du Tillet's cunning, as Napoleon said of somebody (I have forgotten the name), is like cotton spun too fine, it breaks."

"I do not myself see that Nucingen has any advantage over du Tillet," said Blondet, "unless it is that he has the sense to see that a capitalist ought not to rise higher than a baron's rank, while du Tillet has a mind to be an Italian count."

"Blondet—one word, my boy," put in Couture. "In the first place, Nucingen dared to say that honesty is simply a question of appearances; and, secondly, to know him well you must be in business yourself. With him banking is but a single department, and a very small one; he holds Government contracts for wines, wools, indigoes—anything, in short, on which any profit can be made. He has an all-round genius. The elephant of finance would contract to deliver votes on a division, or the Greeks to the Turks. For him business means the sum-total of varieties; as Cousin would say, the unity of specialties. Looked at in this way, banking becomes a kind of statecraft in itself, requiring a powerful head; and a man thoroughly tempered is drawn on to set himself above the laws of a morality that cramps him."

"Right, my son," said Blondet, "but we, and we alone, can comprehend that this means bringing war into the financial world. A banker is a conquering general making sacrifices on a tremendous scale to gain ends that no one perceives; his soldiers are private people's interests. He has stratagems to plan out, partisans to bring into the field, ambushes to set, towns to take. Most men of this stamp are so close upon the borders of politics that in the end they are drawn into public life, and thereby lose their fortunes. The firm of Necker, for instance, was ruined in this way; the famous Samuel Bernard was all but ruined. Some great capitalist in every age makes a colossal fortune, and leaves behind him neither fortune nor a family; there was the firm of Pâris Brothers, for instance, that helped to pull down Law; there was Law himself

(beside whom other promoters of companies are but pigmies); there was Bouret and Beaujon—none of them left any representative. Finance, like Time, devours its own children. If the banker is to perpetuate himself, he must found a noble house, a dynasty; like the Fuggers of Antwerp, that lent money to Charles V. and were created Princes of Babenhausen, a family that exists at this day—in the 'Almanach de Gotha.' The instinct of self-preservation, working it may be unconsciously, leads the banker to seek a title. Jacques Cœur was the founder of the great noble house of Noirmoutier, extinct in the reign of Louis XIII. What power that man had! He was ruined for making a legitimate king; and he died, prince of an island in the Archipelago, where he built a magnificent cathedral."

"Oh! you are giving us a historical lecture, we are wandering away from the present; the crown has no right of conferring nobility, and barons and counts are made with closed doors; more is the pity!" said Finot.

"You regret the times of the *savonnette à vilain*,* when you could buy an office that ennobled?" asked Bixiou. "You are right. *Je reviens à nos moutons* (I return to our muttons). Do you know Beaudenord? No? no? no? Ah, well! See how all things pass away! Poor fellow, ten years ago he was the flower of dandyism; and now, so thoroughly absorbed that you no more know him than Finot just now knew the origin of the expression '*coup de Jarnac*'—I repeat that simply for the sake of illustration, and not to tease you, Finot. Well, it is a fact, he belonged to the Faubourg Saint-Germain.

"Beaudenord is the first pigeon that I will bring on the scene. And, in the first place, his name was Godefroid de Beaudenord; neither Finot, nor Blondet, nor Couture, nor I are likely to undervalue such an advantage as that! After a ball, when a score of pretty women stand behooded waiting for their carriages, with their husbands and adorers at their

* Soap-cake for the base-born.

sides, Beaudenord could hear his people called without a pang of mortification. In the second place, he rejoiced in the full complement of limbs; he was whole and sound, had no mote in his eyes, no false hair, no artificial calves; he was neither knock-kneed nor bandy-legged, his dorsal column was straight, his waist slender, his hands white and shapely. His hair was black; he was of a complexion neither too pink, like a grocer's assistant, nor yet too brown, like a Calabrese. Finally, and this is an essential point, Beaudenord was not too handsome, like some of our friends that look rather too much of professional beauties to be anything else; but no more of that; we have said it, it is shocking! Well, he was a crack shot, and sat a horse to admiration; he had fought a duel for a trifle, and had not killed his man.

"If you wish to know in what pure, complete, and unadulterated happiness consists in this nineteenth century in Paris —the happiness, that is to say, of a young man of twenty-six —do you realize that you must enter into the infinitely small details of existence? Beaudenord's bootmaker had precisely hit off his style of foot; he was well shod; his tailor loved to clothe him. Godefroid neither rolled his r's nor lapsed into Normanisms nor Gascon; he spoke pure and correct French, and tied his cravat correctly (like Finot). He had neither father nor mother—such luck had he!—and his guardian was the Marquis d'Aiglemont, his cousin by marriage. He could go among city people as he chose, and the Faubourg Saint-Germain could make no objection; for, fortunately, a young bachelor is allowed to make his own pleasure his sole rule of life, he is at liberty to betake himself wherever amusement is to be found, and to shun the gloomy places where cares flourish and multiply. Finally, he had been vaccinated (you know what I mean, Blondet).

"And yet, in spite of all these virtues," continued Bixiou, "he might very well have been a very unhappy young man. Eh! eh! that word happiness, unhappily, seems to us to mean

something absolute, a delusion which sets so many wiseacres inquiring what happiness is. A very clever woman said that 'Happiness was where you chose to put it.'"

"She formulated a dismal truth," said Blondet.

"And a moral," added Finot.

"Double distilled," said Blondet. "Happiness, like Good, like Evil, is relative. Wherefore La Fontaine used to hope that in course of time the damned would feel as much at home in hell as a fish in water."

"La Fontaine's sayings are known in Philistia!" put in Bixiou.

"Happiness at six-and-twenty in Paris is not the happiness of six-and-twenty at—say Blois," continued Blondet, taking no notice of the interruption. "And those that proceed from this text to rail at the instability of opinion are either knaves or fools for their pains. Modern medicine, which passed (it is its fairest title to glory) from a hypothetical to a positive science, through the influence of the great analytical school of Paris, has proved beyond a doubt that a man is periodically renewed throughout——"

"New haft, new blade, like Jeannot's knife, and yet you think that he is still the same man," broke in Bixiou. "So there are several lozenges in the harlequin's coat that we call happiness; and—well, there was neither hole nor stain in this Godefroid's costume. A young man of six-and-twenty, who would be happy in love, who would be loved, that is to say, not for his blossoming youth, nor for his wit, nor for his figure, but spontaneously, and not even merely in return for his own love; a young man, I say, who has found love in the abstract, to quote Royer-Collard, might yet very possibly find never a farthing in the purse which She, loving and beloved, embroidered for him; he might owe rent to his landlord; he might be unable to pay the bootmaker before mentioned; his very tailor, like France herself, might at last show signs of disaffection. In short, he might have love and yet be poor.

And poverty spoils a young man's happiness, unless he holds our transcendental views of the fusion of interests. I know nothing more wearing than happiness within combined with adversity without. It is as if you had one leg freezing in the draught from the door, and the other half-roasted by a brasier —as I have at this moment. I hope to be understood. Comes there an echo from thy vest-pocket, Blondet? Between ourselves, let the heart alone, it spoils the intellect.

"Let us resume. Godefroid de Beaudenord was respected by his tradespeople, for they were paid with tolerable regularity. The witty woman before quoted—I cannot give her name, for she is still living, thanks to her want of heart——"

"Who is this?"

"The Marquise d'Espard. She said that a young man ought to live on an entresol; there should be no sign of domesticity about the place; no cook, no kitchen, an old manservant to wait upon him, and no pretense of a permanence. In her opinion, any other sort of establishment is bad form. Godefroid de Beaudenord, faithful to this programme, lodged on an entresol on the Quai Malaquais; he had, however, been obliged to have this much in common with married couples, he had put a bedstead in his room, though for that matter it was so narrow that he seldom slept in it. An Englishwoman might have visited his rooms and found nothing 'improper' there. Finot, you have yet to learn the great law of the 'Improper' that rules Britain. But, for the sake of the bond between us—that bill for a thousand francs—I will just give you some idea of it. I have been in England myself. I will give him wit enough for a couple of thousand," he added in an aside to Blondet.

"In England, Finot, you grow extremely intimate with a woman in the course of an evening, at a ball or wherever it is; next day you meet her in the street and look as though you knew her again—'improper.' At dinner you discover a delightful man beneath your left-hand neighbor's dress-coat;

a clever man; no high-mightiness, no constraint, nothing of an Englishman about him. In accordance with the tradition of French breeding, so urbane, so gracious as they are, you address your neighbor—'improper.' At a ball you walk up to a pretty woman to ask her to dance—'improper.' You wax enthusiastic, you argue, laugh, and give yourself out, you fling yourself heart and soul into the conversation, you give expression to your real feelings, you play when you are at the card-table, chat while you chat, eat while you eat—'improper! improper! improper!' Stendhal, one of the cleverest and profoundest minds of the age, hit off the 'improper' excellently well when he said that such-and-such a British peer did not dare to cross his legs when he sat alone before his own hearth for fear of being improper. An English gentlewoman, were she one of the rabid 'Saints'—that most *straitest* sect of Protestants that would leave their whole family to starve if the said family did anything 'improper'—may play the deuce's own delight in her bedroom, and need not be 'improper,' but she would look on herself as lost if she received a visit from a man of her acquaintance in the aforesaid room. Thanks to propriety, London and its inhabitants will be found petrified some of these days."

"And to think that there are asses here in France that want to import the solemn tomfoolery that the English keep up among themselves with that admirable self-possession which you know!" added Blondet. "It is enough to make any man shudder if he has seen the English at home, and recollects the charming, gracious French manners. Sir Walter Scott was afraid to paint women as they are for fear of being 'improper;' and at the close of his life repented of the creation of the great character of Effie in 'The Heart of Midlothian.'"

"Do you wish not to be 'improper' in England?" asked Bixiou, addressing Finot.

"Well?"

"Go to the Tuileries and look at a figure there, something

like a fireman carved in marble ('Themistocles,' the statuary calls it), try to walk like the commandant's statue, and you will never be 'improper.' It was through strict observance of the great law of the *Im*proper that Godefroid's happiness became complete. Here is the story:

"Beaudenord had a tiger, not a 'groom,' as they write that know nothing of society. The tiger, a diminutive Irish page, called Paddy, Toby, Joby (which you please), was three feet in height by twenty inches in breadth, a weasel-faced infant, with nerves of steel tempered in fire-water, and agile as a squirrel. He drove a landau with a skill never yet at fault in London or Paris. He had a lizard's eye, as sharp as my own, and he could mount a horse like the elder Franconi. With the rosy cheeks and yellow hair of one of Ruben's Madonnas, he was double-faced as a prince, and as knowing as an old attorney; in short, at the age of ten he was nothing more nor less than a blossom of depravity, gambling and swearing, partial to jam and punch, pert as a *feuilleton* (news-skit), impudent and light-fingered as any Paris street-arab. He had been a source of honor and profit to a well-known English lord, for whom he had already won seven hundred thousand francs on the racecourse. The aforesaid nobleman set no small store on Toby. His tiger was a curiosity, the very smallest tiger in town. Perched aloft on the back of a thoroughbred, Joby looked like a hawk. Yet—the great man dismissed him. Not for greediness, not for dishonesty, nor murder, nor for criminal conversation, nor for bad manners, nor rudeness to my lady, nor for cutting holes in my lady's own woman's pockets, nor because he had been 'got at' by some of his master's rivals on the turf, nor for playing games of a Sunday, nor for bad behavior of any sort or description. Toby might have done all these things, he might even have spoken to milord before milord spoke to him, and his noble master might, perhaps, have pardoned that breach of the law-domestic. Milord would have put up with a good deal from

Toby; he was very fond of him. Toby could drive a tandem dog-cart, riding on the wheeler, postillion fashion; his legs did not reach the shafts, he looked in fact very much like one of the cherub heads circling about the Eternal Father in old Italian pictures. But an English journalist wrote a delicious description of the little angel, in the course of which he said that Paddy was quite too pretty for a tiger; in fact, he offered to bet that Paddy was a tame tigress. The description, on the heads of it, was calculated to poison minds and end in something 'improper.' And the superlative of 'improper' is the way to the gallows. Milord's circumspection was highly approved by my lady.

"But poor Toby, now that his precise position in insular zoology had been called in question, found himself hopelessly out of place. At that time Godefroid had blossomed out at the French Embassy in London, where he learned the adventures of Joby, Toby, Paddy. Godefroid found the infant weeping over a pot of jam (he had already lost the guineas with which milord gilded his misfortune). Godefroid took possession of him; and so it fell out that on his return among us he brought back with him the sweetest thing in tigers from England. He was known by his tiger—as Couture is known by his waistcoats—and found no difficulty in entering the fraternity of the club yclept to-day the Grammont. He had renounced the diplomatic career; he ceased accordingly to alarm the susceptibilities of the ambitious; and as he had no very dangerous amount of intellect, he was well-looked upon everywhere.

"Some of us would feel mortified if we saw only smiling faces wherever we went; we enjoy the sour contortions of envy. Godefroid did not like to be disliked. Every one has his taste. Now for the solid, practical aspects of life!

"The distinguishing feature of his chambers, where I have licked my lips over breakfast more than once, was a mysterious dressing-closet, nicely decorated, and comfortably appointed,

with a grate in it and a bath-tub. It gave upon a narrow staircase, the folding doors were noiseless, the locks well oiled, the hinges discreet, the window-panes of frosted glass, the curtain impervious to light. While the bedroom was, as it ought to have been, in a fine disorder which would suit the most exacting painter in water-colors; while everything therein was redolent of the bohemian life of a young man of fashion, the dressing-closet was like a shrine—white, spotless, neat, and warm. There were no draughts from door or window, the carpet had been made soft for bare feet hastily put to the floor in a sudden panic of alarm—which stamps him as your thoroughbred dandy that knows life; for here, in a few moments, he may show himself either a noodle or a master in those little details in which a man's character is revealed. The marquise previously quoted—no, it was the Marquise de Rochefide—came out of that dressing-closet in a furious rage, and never went back again. She discovered nothing 'improper' in it. Godefroid used to keep a little cupboard full of——"

"Waistcoats?" suggested Finot.

"Come, now, just like you, great Turcaret that you are. (I shall never form that fellow.) Why, no. Full of cakes, and fruit, and dainty little flasks of Malaga and Lunel; an *en cas de nuit* in Louis Quatorze's style; anything that can tickle the delicate and well-bred appetite of sixteen quarterings. A knowing old manservant, very strong in matters veterinary, waited on the horses and groomed Godefroid. He had been with the late Monsieur de Beaudenord, Godefroid's father, and bore Godefroid an inveterate affection, a kind of heart complaint which has almost disappeared among domestic servants since savings banks were established.

"All material well-being is based upon arithmetic. You, to whom Paris is known down to its very excrescences, will see that Beaudenord must have required about seventeen thousand livres per annum; for he paid some seventeen francs of

taxes and spent a thousand crowns on his own whims. Well, dear boys, when Godefroid came of age, the Marquis d'Aiglemont submitted to him such an account of his trust as none of us would be likely to give a nephew; Godefroid's name was inscribed as the owner of eighteen thousand livres of *rentes* (government stock), a remnant of his father's wealth spared by the harrow of the great reduction under the Republic and the hailstorms of Imperial arrears. D'Aiglemont, that upright guardian, also put his ward in possession of some thirty thousand francs of savings invested with the firm of Nucingen; saying, with all the charm of a great lord and the indulgence of a soldier of the Empire, that he had contrived to put it aside for his ward's young man's follies. 'If you will take my advice, Godefroid,' added he, 'instead of squandering the money like a fool, as so many young men do, let it go in follies that will be useful to you afterward. Take an attaché's post at Turin, and then go to Naples, and from Naples to London, and you will be amused and learn something for your money. Afterward, if you think of a career, the time and the money will not have been thrown away.' The late lamented d'Aiglemont had more sense than people credited him with, which is more than can be said of some of us."

"A young fellow that starts with an assured income of eighteen thousand livres at one-and-twenty is lost," said Couture.

"Unless he is miserly or very much above the ordinary level," added Blondet.

"Well, Godefroid sojourned in the four capitals of Italy," continued Bixiou. "He lived in England and Germany, he spent some little time at St. Petersburg, he ran over Holland; but he parted company with the aforesaid thirty thousand francs by living as if he had thirty thousand a year. Everywhere he found the same *suprême de volaille* (sublime poultry), the same aspics, and French wines; he heard French spoken wherever he went—in short, he never got away from Paris.

He ought, of course, to have tried to deprave his disposition, to fence himself in triple brass, to get rid of his illusions, to learn to hear anything said without a blush, and to master the inmost secrets of the Powers. Pooh! with a good deal of trouble he equipped himself with four languages—that is to say, he laid in a stock of four words for one idea. Then he came back, and certain tedious dowagers, styled 'conquests' abroad, were left disconsolate. Godefroid came back, shy, scarcely formed, a good fellow with a confiding disposition, incapable of saying ill of any one who honored him with an admittance to his house, too stanch to be a diplomatist—altogether he was what we call a thoroughly whole-souled good fellow."

"To cut it short, a kid with eighteen thousand livres per annum to drop over the first investment that turns up," said Couture.

"That confounded Couture has such a habit of anticipating dividends that he is anticipating the end of my tale. Where was I? Oh! Beaudenord came back. When he took up his abode on the Quai Malaquais, it came to pass that a thousand francs over and above his needs was altogether insufficient to keep up his share of a box at the Italiens and the opera properly. When he lost twenty-five or thirty louis at play at one swoop, naturally he paid; when he won, he spent the money; so should we if we were fools enough to be drawn into a bet. Beaudenord, feeling pinched with his eighteen thousand francs, saw the necessity of creating what we to-day call a balance in hand. It was a great notion of his 'not to get too deep.' He took counsel of his sometime guardian. 'The funds are now at par, my dear boy,' quoth d'Aiglemont; 'sell out. I have sold out mine and my wife's. Nucingen has all my capital, and is giving me six per cent.; do likewise, you will have one per cent. the more upon your capital, and with that you will be quite comfortable.'

"In three days' time our Godefroid was comfortable. His

increase of income exactly supplied his superfluities; his material happiness was complete.

"Suppose that it were possible to read the minds of all the young men in Paris at one glance (as, it appears, will be done at the Day of Judgment with all the millions upon millions that have groveled in all spheres, and worn all uniforms or the uniform of nature), and to ask them whether happiness at six-and-twenty is or is not made up of the following items—to wit: to own a saddle-horse and a tilbury, or a cab, with a fresh, rosy-faced Toby, Joby, Paddy no bigger than your fist, and to hire an unimpeachable brougham for twelve francs an evening; to appear elegantly arrayed, agreeably to the laws that regulate a man's clothes, at eight o'clock, noon, four o'clock in the afternoon, and in the evening; to be well received at every embassy, and to cull the short-lived flowers of superficial, cosmopolitan friendships; to be not insufferably handsome, to carry your head, your coat and your name well; to inhabit a charming little entresol after the pattern of the rooms just described on the Quai Malaquais; to be able to ask a party of friends to dine at the Rocher de Cancale without a previous consultation with your trousers' pocket; never to be pulled up in any rational project by the words, 'And the money?' and, finally, to be able to renew at pleasure the pink rosettes that adorn the ears of your three thoroughbreds and the lining of your hat?

"To such inquiry any ordinary young man (and we ourselves that are not ordinary men) would reply that the happiness is incomplete; that it is like the Madeleine without the altar; that a man must love and be loved, or love without return, or be loved without loving, or love at cross-purposes. Now for happiness as a mental condition.

"In January, 1823, after Godefroid de Beaudenord had set foot in the various social circles which it pleased him to enter, and knew his way about in them, and felt himself secure amid these joys, he saw the necessity of a sunshade—the advantage

of having a great lady to complain of, instead of chewing the stems of roses bought for ten sous apiece of Madame Prévost, after the manner of the callow youngsters that chirp and cackle in the lobbies of the opera, like chickens in a coop. In short, he resolved to centre his ideas, his sentiments, his affections upon a woman, *one woman!*—La Phamme! Ah!——

"At first he conceived the preposterous notion of an unhappy passion, and gyrated for a while about his fair cousin, Mme. d'Aiglemont, not perceiving that she had already danced the waltz in 'Faust' with a diplomatist. The year '25 went by, spent in tentatives, in futile flirtations, and an unsuccessful quest. The loving object of which he was in search did not appear. Passion is extremely rare; and in our time as many barriers have been raised against passion in social life as barricades in the streets. In truth, my brothers, the 'improper' is gaining upon us, I tell you!

"As we incur reproach for following on the heels of portrait painters, auctioneers, and fashionable dressmakers, I will not inflict any description upon you of Her in whom Godefroid recognized the female of his species. Age, nineteen; height, four feet eleven inches; fair hair, eyebrows *idem*, blue eyes, forehead neither high nor low, curved nose, little mouth, short turned-up chin, oval face; distinguishing signs—none. Such was the description on the passport of the beloved object. You will not ask more than the police, or their worships the mayors, of all the towns and communes of France, the gendarmes and the rest of the powers that be? In other respects —I give you my word for it—she was a rough sketch of a Venus de' Medici.

"The first time that Godefroid went to one of the balls for which Madame de Nucingen enjoyed a certain not undeserved reputation, he caught a glimpse of his future lady-love in a quadrille, and was set marveling by that height of four feet eleven inches. The fair hair rippled in a shower of curls about the little girlish head, she looked as fresh as a naïad

peeping out through the crystal pane of her stream to take a look at the spring flowers. (This is quite in the modern style, strings of phrases as endless as the macaroni on the table a while ago.) On that 'eyebrows *idem*' (no offense to the prefect of police) Parny, that writer of light and playful verse, would have hung half-a-dozen couplets, comparing them very agreeably to Cupid's bow, at the same time bidding us observe that the dart was beneath; the said dart, however, was neither very potent nor very penetrating, for as yet it was controlled by the namby-pamby sweetness of a Mademoiselle de la Vallière as depicted on fire-screens, at the moment when she solemnizes her betrothal in the sight of heaven, any solemnization before the registrar being quite out of the question.

"You know the effect of fair hair and blue eyes in the soft, voluptuous decorous dance? Such a girl does not knock audaciously at your heart, like the dark-haired damsels that seem to say after the fashion of Spanish beggars: 'Your money or your life; give me five francs or take my contempt!' These insolent and somewhat dangerous beauties may find favor in the sight of many men, but to my thinking the blonde that has the good-fortune to look extremely tender and yielding, while foregoing none of her rights to scold, to tease, to use unmeasured language, to be jealous without grounds, to do anything, in short, that makes woman adorable—the fair-haired girl, I say, will be always more sure to marry than the ardent brunette. Firewood is dear, you see.

"Isaure, white as an Alsacienne (she first saw the light at Strasbourg, and spoke German with a slight and very agreeable French accent), danced to admiration. Her feet, omitted on the passport, though they really might have found a place there under the heading 'Distinguishing Signs,' were remarkable for their small size, and for that particular something which old-fashioned dancing-masters used to call *flic-flac*, a something that put you in mind of Mademoiselle Mars' agreeable delivery, for all the Muses are sisters, and dancer and poet

alike have their feet upon the earth. Isaure's feet spoke lightly and swiftly with a clearness and precision which augured well for the things of the heart. '*Elle a du flic-flac*' (she has some flic-flac), was old Marcel's highest word of praise, and old Marcel was the dancing-master that deserved the epithet of 'the Great.' People used to say 'the Great Marcel,' as they said 'Frederick the Great,' and in Frederick's time."

"Did Marcel compose any ballets?" inquired Finot.

"Yes, something in the style of *Les Quatre Éléments* (The Four Elements) and *L'Europe galante*" (The Gallants of Europe).

"What times they were, when great nobles dressed the dancers!" said Finot.

"Improper!" said Bixiou. "Isaure did not raise herself on the tips of her toes, she stayed on the ground, she swayed in the dance without jerks, and neither more nor less voluptuously than a young lady ought to do. There was a profound philosophy in Marcel's remark that every age and condition has its dance; a married woman should not dance like a young girl, nor a little jackanapes like a capitalist, nor a soldier like a page; he even went so far as to say that the infantry ought not to dance like the cavalry, and from this point he proceeded to classify the world at large. All these fine distinctions seem very far away."

"Ah!" said Blondet, "you have set your finger on a great calamity. If Marcel had been properly understood, there would have been no French Revolution."

"It had been Godefroid's privilege to run over Europe," resumed Bixiou, "nor had he neglected his opportunities of making a thorough comparative study of European dancing. Perhaps but for profound diligence in the pursuit of what is usually held to be useless knowledge, he would never have fallen in love with this young lady; as it was, out of the three hundred guests that crowded the handsome rooms in the Rue

Saint-Lazare, he alone comprehended the unpublished romance revealed by a garrulous quadrille. People certainly noticed Isaure d'Aldrigger's dancing; but in this present century the cry is, 'Skim lightly over the surface, do not lean your weight on it;' so one said (he was a notary's clerk): 'There is a girl that dances uncommonly well;' another (a lady in a turban): 'There is a young lady that dances enchantingly;' and a third (a woman of thirty): 'That little thing is not dancing badly.' But to return to the great Marcel, let us parody his best-known saying with, 'How much there is in an *avant-deux*.'"

"And let us get on a little faster," said Blondet; "you are maundering."

"Isaure," continued Bixiou, looking askance at Blondet, "wore a simple white crepe dress with green ribbons; she had a camellia in her hair, a camellia at her waist, another camellia at her skirt-hem, and a camellia——"

"Come, now! here come Sancho's three hundred goats."

"Therein lies all literature, dear boy. Clarissa is a masterpiece, there are fourteen volumes of her, and the most wooden-headed playwright would give you the whole of Clarissa in a single act. So long as I amuse you, what have you to complain of? That costume was positively lovely. Don't you like camellias? Would you rather have dahlias? No? Very good, chestnuts then, here's for you." (And probably Bixiou flung a chestnut across the table, for we heard something drop on a plate.)

"I was wrong, I acknowledge it. Go on," said Blondet.

"I resume. 'Pretty enough to marry, isn't she?' said Rastignac, coming up to Godefroid de Beaudenord, and indicating the little one with the spotless white camellias, every petal intact.

"Rastignac being an intimate friend, Godefroid answered in a low voice, 'Well, so I was thinking. I was saying to myself that instead of enjoying my happiness with fear and

trembling at every moment; instead of taking a world of trouble to whisper a word in an inattentive ear, of looking over the house at the Italiens to see if some one wears a red flower or a white in her hair, or watching along the Corso for a gloved hand on a carriage-door, as we used to do at Milan; instead of snatching a mouthful of bun like a lackey finishing off a bottle behind a door, or wearing out one's wits with giving and receiving letters like a postman—letters that consist not of a mere couple of tender lines, but expand to five folio volumes to-day and contract to a couple of sheets to-morrow (a tiresome practice); instead of dragging along over the ruts and dodging behind hedges—it would be better to give way to the adorable passion that Jean-Jacques Rousseau envied, to fall frankly in love with a girl like Isaure, with a view to making her my wife, if upon exchange of sentiments our hearts respond to each other; to be Werther, in short, with a happy ending.'

"'Which is a common weakness,' returned Rastignac without laughing. 'Possibly in your place I might plunge into the unspeakable delights of that ascetic course; it possesses the merits of novelty and originality, and it is not very expensive. Your Monna Lisa is sweet, but inane as music for the ballet; I give you warning.'

"Rastignac made this last remark in a way which set Beaudenord thinking that his friend had his own motives for disenchanting him; Beaudenord had not been a diplomatist for nothing; he fancied that Rastignac wanted to cut him out. If a man mistakes his vocation, the false start none the less influences him for the rest of his life. Godefroid was so evidently smitten with Mademoiselle Isaure d'Aldrigger that Rastignac went off to a tall girl chatting in the card-room. 'Malvina,' he said, lowering his voice, 'your sister has just netted a fish worth eighteen thousand francs a year. He has a name, a manner, and a certain position in the world; keep an eye upon them; be careful to gain Isaure's confidence; and

if they philander, do not let her send a word to him unless you have seen it first——'

"Toward two o'clock in the morning, Isaure was standing beside a diminutive Shepherdess of the Alps, a little woman of forty, coquettish as a Zerlina. A footman announced that 'Madame la Baronne's carriage stops the way,' and Godefroid forthwith saw his beautiful maiden out of a German song draw her fantastical mother into the cloak-room, whither Malvina followed them; and (boy that he was) he must needs go to discover into what pot of preserves the infant Joby had fallen, and had the pleasure of watching Isaure and Malvina coaxing that sparkling person, their mamma, into her pelisse, with all the little tender precautions required for a night journey in Paris. Of course, the girls on their side watched Beaudenord out of the corners of their eyes, as well-taught kittens watch a mouse, without seeming to see it at all. With a certain satisfaction Beaudenord noted the bearing, manner, and appearance of the tall, well-gloved Alsacian servant in livery who brought three pairs of fur-lined overshoes for his mistresses.

"Never were two sisters more unlike than Isaure and Malvina. Malvina the elder was tall and dark-haired, Isaure was short and fair, and her features were finely and delicately cut, while her sister's were vigorous and striking. Isaure was one of those women who reign like queens through their weakness, such a woman as a schoolboy would feel it incumbent upon him to protect; Malvina was the Andalouse of Musset's poem. As the sisters stood together, Isaure looked like a miniature beside a portrait in oils.

"'She is rich!' exclaimed Godefroid, going back to Rastignac in the ballroom.

"'Who?'

"'That young lady.'

"'Oh, Isaure d'Aldrigger? Why, yes. The mother is a widow; Nucingen was once a clerk in her husband's bank at Strasbourg. Do you want to see them again? Just turn off

a compliment for Madame de Restaud; she is giving a ball the day after to-morrow; the Baroness d'Aldrigger and her two daughters will be there. You will have an invitation.'

"For three days Godefroid beheld Isaure in the camera obscura of his brain—*his* Isaure with her white camellias and the little ways she had with her head—saw her as you still see the bright thing on which you have been gazing after your eyes are shut, a picture grown somewhat smaller; a radiant, brightly colored vision flashing out of a vortex of darkness."

"Bixiou, you are dropping into phenomena, block us out our pictures," put in Couture.

"Here you are, gentlemen! Here is the picture you ordered!" (from the tones of Bixiou's voice, he evidently was posing as a waiter.) "Finot! attention, one has to pull at your mouth as a jarvie [cab-driver] pulls at his jade. In Madame Theodora Marguerite Wilhelmine Adolphus (of the firm of Adolphus and Company, Mannheim), relict of the late Baron d'Aldrigger, you might expect to find a stout, comfortable German, compact and prudent, with a fair complexion mellowed to the tint of the foam on a pot of beer; and as to virtues, rich in all the patriarchal good qualities that Germany possesses—in romances, that is to say. Well, there was not a gray hair in the frisky ringlets that she wore on either side of her face; she was still as fresh and as brightly colored on the cheek-bones as a Nuremberg doll; her eyes were lively and bright; a closely fitting, pointed bodice set off the slenderness of her waist. Her brow and temples were furrowed by a few involuntary wrinkles which, like Ninon, she would fain have banished from her head to her heel, but they persisted in tracing their zigzags in the more conspicuous place. The outlines of the nose had somewhat fallen away, and the tip had reddened, and this was the more awkward because it matched the color on the cheek-bones.

"An only daughter and an heiress, spoilt by her father and mother, spoilt by her husband and the city of Strasbourg,

spoilt still by two daughters who worshiped their mother, the Baroness d'Aldrigger indulged a taste for rose color, short petticoats, and a knot of ribbon at the point of the tightly fitting corselet bodice. Any Parisian meeting the baroness on the boulevard would smile and condemn her outright; he does not admit any plea of extenuating circumstances, like a modern jury on a case of fratricide. A scoffer is always superficial, and in consequence cruel; the rascal never thinks of throwing the proper share of ridicule on society that made the individual what he is; for Nature only makes dull animals of us, we owe the fool to artificial conditions."

"The thing that I admire about Bixiou is his completeness," said Blondet; "whenever he is not gibing at others, he is laughing at himself."

"I will be even with you for that, Blondet," returned Bixiou in a significant tone. "If the little baroness was giddy, careless, selfish, and incapable in practical matters, she was not accountable for her sins; the responsibility is divided between the firm of Adolphus and Company of Mannheim and Baron d'Aldrigger with his blind love for his wife. The baroness was as gentle as a lamb; she had a soft heart that was very readily moved; unluckily, the emotion never lasted long, but it was all the more frequently renewed.

"When the baron died, for instance, the Shepherdess all but followed him to the tomb, so violent and sincere was her grief, but—next morning there were green peas at lunch, she was fond of green peas, the delicious green peas calmed the crisis. Her daughters and her servants loved her so blindly that the whole household rejoiced over a circumstance that enabled them to hide the dolorous spectacle of the funeral from the sorrowing baroness. Isaure and Malvina would not allow their idolized mother to see their tears.

"While the requiem was being chanted they diverted her thoughts to the choice of mourning dresses. While the coffin was placed in the huge, black and white, wax-besprinkled

catafalque that does duty for some three thousand dead in the course of its career—so I was informed by a philosophically-minded mute whom I once consulted on the point over a couple of glasses of *petit blanc*—while an indifferent choir was bawling the *Dies iræ*, and a no less indifferent priest mumbling the office for the dead, do you know what the friends of the departed were saying as, all dressed in black from head to foot, they sat or stood in the church? (Here is the picture you ordered.) Stay, do you see them?

"'How much do you suppose old d'Aldrigger will leave?' Desroches asked of Taillefer. You remember Taillefer that gave us the finest orgie ever known not long before he died?"

"But was Desroches an attorney in those days?"

"He was in treaty for a practice in 1822," said Couture. "It was a bold thing to do, for he was the son of a poor clerk who never made more than eighteen hundred francs a year, and his mother sold stamped paper. But he worked very hard from 1818 to 1822. He was Derville's fourth clerk when he came; and in 1819 he was second!"

"Desroches?"

"Yes. Desroches, like the rest of us, once groveled in the poverty of Job. He grew so tired of wearing coats too tight and sleeves too short for him that he swallowed down the law in desperation and had just bought a bare license. He was a licensed attorney, without a penny, or a client, or any friends beyond our set; and he was bound to pay interest on the purchase-money and the cautionary deposit beside."

"He used to make me feel as if I had met a tiger escaped from the Jardin des Plantes," said Couture. "He was lean and red-haired, his eyes were the color of Spanish snuff, and his complexion was harsh. He looked cold and phlegmatic. He was hard upon the widow, pitiless to the orphan, and a terror to his clerks; they were not allowed to waste a minute. Learned, crafty, double-faced, honey-tongued, never flying into a passion, rancorous in his judicial way."

"But there is goodness in him," cried Finot; "he is devoted to his friends. The first thing he did was to take Godeschal, Mariette's brother, as his head-clerk."

"At Paris," said Blondet, "there are attorneys of two shades. There is the honest man attorney; he abides within the province of the law, pushes on his cases, neglects no one, never runs after business, gives his clients his honest opinion, and makes them compromise on doubtful points—he is a Derville, in short. Then there is the starveling attorney, to whom anything seems good provided that he is sure of expenses; he will set, not mountains fighting, for he sells them, but planets; he will work to make the worse appear the better cause, and take advantage of a technical error to win the day for a rogue. If one of these fellows tries one of Maître Gonin's tricks once too often, the guild forces him to sell his connection. Desroches, our friend Desroches, understood the full resources of a trade carried on in a beggarly way enough by poor devils; he would buy up causes of men who feared to lose the day; he plunged into chicanery with a fixed determination to make money by it. He was right; he did his business very honestly. He found influence among men in public life by getting them out of awkward complications; there was our dear des Lupeaulx, for instance, whose position was so deeply compromised. And Desroches stood in need of influence; for, when he began, he was anything but well looked on at the court, and he who took so much trouble to rectify the errors of his clients was often in trouble himself. See now, Bixiou, to go back to the subject—How came Desroches to be in the church?"

"'D'Aldrigger is leaving seven or eight hundred thousand francs,' Taillefer answered, addressing Desroches.

"'Oh, pooh, there is only one man who knows how much *they* are worth,' put in Werbrust, a friend of the deceased.

"'Who?'

"'That fat rogue Nucingen; he will go as far as the ceme-

tery; d'Aldrigger was his master once, and out of gratitude he put the old man's capital into his business.'

"'The widow will soon feel a great difference.'

"'What do you mean?'

"'Well, d'Aldrigger was so fond of his wife. Now, don't laugh, people are looking at us.'

"'Look, here comes du Tillet; he is very late. The Epistle is just beginning.'

"'He will marry the eldest girl in all probability.'

"'Is it possible?' asked Desroches; 'why, he is tied more than ever to Madame Roguin.'

"'*Tied*—he? You do not know him.'

"'Do you know how Nucingen and du Tillet stand?' asked Desroches.

"'Like this,' said Taillefer; 'Nucingen is just the man to swallow down his old master's* capital, and then to disgorge it.'

"'Ugh! ugh!' coughed Werbrust, 'these churches are confoundedly damp; ugh! ugh! What do you mean by "disgorge it?"'

"'Well, Nucingen knows that du Tillet has a lot of money; he wants to marry him to Malvina; but du Tillet is shy of Nucingen. To a looker-on, the game is good fun.'

"'What!' exclaimed Werbrust, 'is she old enough to marry? How quickly we grow old!'

"'Malvina d'Aldrigger is quite twenty years old, my dear fellow. Old d'Aldrigger was married in 1800. He gave some rather fine entertainments in Strasbourg at the time of his wedding, and afterward when Malvina was born. That was in 1801 at the peace of Amiens, and here are we in the year 1823, Daddy Werbrust! In those days everything was Ossianized; he called his daughter Malvina. Six years afterward there was a rage for chivalry, "Partant pour la Syrie"—a pack of nonsense—and he christened his second daughter

* See "César Birotteau."

Isaure. She is seventeen. So there are two daughters to marry.'

"'The women will not have a penny left in ten years' time,' said Werbrust, speaking to Desroches in a confidential tone.

"'There is d'Aldrigger's manservant, the old fellow bellowing away at the back of the church; he has been with them since the two young ladies were children, and he is capable of anything to keep enough together for them to live upon,' said Taillefer.

"'*Dies iræ!*'* (from the minor canons.) '*Dies illa!*' (from the choristers.)

"'Good-day, Werbrust' (from Taillefer), 'the *Dies iræ* puts me too much in mind of my poor boy.'

"'I shall go too; it is too damp in here,' said Werbrust.

"'*In favilla.*'

"'A few centimes, kind gentlemen!' (from the beggars at the door.)

"'For the expenses of the church!' (from the beadle, with a rattling clatter of the money-box.)

"'*Amen*' (from the choristers.)

"'What did he die of?' (from a friend.)

"'He broke a bloodvessel in the heel' (from an inquisitive wag.)

"'Who is dead?' (from a passer-by.)

"'The President de Montesquieu!' (from a relative.)

"The sacristan to the poor, 'Get away, all of you; the money for you has been given to us; don't ask for any more.'"

"Done to the life!" cried Couture. And indeed it seemed to us that we heard all that went on in the church. Bixiou imitated everything, even the shuffling sound of the feet of the men that carried the coffin over the stone floor.

"There are poets and romancers and writers that say many

* Day of Wrath: An antiphonal funeral hymn.

fine things about Parisian manners," continued Bixiou, "but that is what really happens at a funeral. Ninety-nine out of a hundred that come to pay their respects to some poor devil departed get together and talk business or pleasure in the middle of the church.* To see some poor little touch of real sorrow, you need an impossible combination of circumstances. And, after all, is there such a thing as grief without a thought of self in it?"

"Ugh!" said Blondet. "Nothing is less respected than death; is it that there is nothing less respectable?"

"It is so common!" resumed Bixiou. "When the service was over, Nucingen and du Tillet went to the graveside. The old manservant walked; Nucingen and du Tillet were put at the head of the procession of mourning coaches. 'Goot, mein goot friend,' said Nucingen as they turned into the boulevard. 'It ees a goot time to marry Malfina; you vill be der brodector off dat boor family vat ees in tears; you vill haf ein family, a home off your own; you vill haf a house ready vurnished, und Malfina is truly ein dreashure.'"

"I seem to hear that old Robert Macaire of a Nucingen himself," said Finot.

"'A charming girl,' said Ferdinand du Tillet in a cool, unenthusiastic tone," Bixiou continued.

"Just du Tillet himself summed up in a word!" cried Couture.

"'Those that do not know her may think her plain,' pursued du Tillet, 'but she has character, I admit.'

"'Und ein herz, dot is the pest of die pizness, mein dear poy; she vould make you an indelligent und defoted vife. In our beastly pizness, nopody cares to know who lifs or dies; it is a crate plessing gif a mann kann put drust in his vife's heart. Mein Telvine prought me more as a million, as you

*It may be noted that the city churches are without permanent seats; chairs are in readiness at the portals and are carried by the attendants to the position desired.

know, but I should gladly gif her for Malfina dot haf not so pig a *dot*.'

"'But how much has she?'

"'I do not know precisely; boot she haf somdings.'

"'Yes, she has a mother with a great liking for rose-color,' said du Tillet; and with that epigram he cut Nucingen's diplomatic efforts short.

"After dinner the Baron de Nucingen informed Wilhelmine Adolphus that she had barely four hundred thousand francs deposited with him. The daughter of Adolphus of Mannheim, thus reduced to an income of twenty-four thousand livres, lost herself in arithmetical exercises that muddled her wits.

"'I have *always* had six thousand francs for our dress allowance,' she said to Malvina. 'Why, how did your father find money? We shall have nothing now with twenty-four thousand francs; it is destitution! Oh! if my father could see me so come down in the world, it would kill him if he were not dead already! Poor Wilhelmine!' and she began to cry.

"Malvina, puzzled to know how to comfort her mother, represented to her that she was still young and pretty, that rose-color still became her, that she could continue to go to the opera and the Bouffons, where Mme. de Nucingen had a box. And so with visions of gayeties, dances, music, pretty dresses, and social success, the baroness was lulled to sleep and pleasant dreams in the blue, silk-curtained bed in the charming room next to the chamber in which Jean-Baptiste, Baron d'Aldrigger, had breathed his last but two nights ago.

"Here in a few words is the baron's history. During his lifetime that worthy Alsacian accumulated about three millions of francs. In 1800, at the age of thirty-six, in the apogee of a fortune made during the Revolution, he made a marriage partly of ambition, partly of inclination, with the heiress of the family of Adolphus of Mannheim. Wilhel-

mine, being the idol of her whole family, naturally inherited their wealth after some ten years. Next, d'Aldrigger's fortune being doubled, he was transformed into a baron by his majesty, Emperor and King, and forthwith became a fanatical admirer of the great man to whom he owed his title. Wherefore, between 1814 and 1815 he ruined himself by a too serious belief in the sun of Austerlitz. Honest Alsacian as he was, he did not suspend payment, nor did he give his creditors shares in doubtful concerns by way of settlement. He paid everything over the counter, and then retired from business, thoroughly deserving Nucingen's comment on his behavior—'Honest but stoobid.'

"All claims satisfied, there remained to him five hundred thousand francs and certain receipts for sums advanced to that Imperial Government, which had ceased to exist. 'See vat komms of too much pelief in Nappolion,' said he, when he had realized all his capital.

"When you have been one of the leading men in a place, how are you to remain in it when your estate has dwindled? D'Aldrigger, like all ruined provincials, removed to Paris, there intrepidly wore the tricolor braces embroidered with Imperial eagles, and lived entirely in Bonapartist circles. His capital he handed over to Nucingen, who gave him eight per cent. upon it, and took over the loans to the Imperial Government at a mere sixty per cent. of reduction; wherefore d'Aldrigger squeezed Nucingen's hand and said, 'I knew dot in you I should find de heart of ein Elzacien. (Nucingen was paid in full through our friend des Lupeaulx.) Well fleeced as d'Aldrigger had been, he still possessed an income of forty-four thousand francs; but his mortification was further complicated by the spleen which lies in wait for the business man so soon as he retires from business. He set himself, noble heart, to sacrifice himself to his wife, now that her fortune was lost, that fortune of which she had allowed herself to be despoiled so easily, after the manner of a girl

entirely ignorant of money matters. Mme. d'Aldrigger accordingly missed not a single pleasure to which she had been accustomed; any void caused by the loss of Strasbourg acquaintances was speedily filled, and more than filled, with Paris gayeties. Even then, as now, the Nucingens lived at the higher end of financial society, and the Baron de Nucingen made it a point of honor to treat the honest banker well. His disinterested virtue looked well in the Nucingen salon.

"Every winter dipped into d'Aldrigger's principal, but he did not venture to remonstrate with his pearl of a Wilhelmine. His was the most ingenuous unintelligent tenderness in the world. A good man, but a stupid one! 'What will become of them when I am gone?' he said, as he lay dying; and when he was left alone for a moment with Wirth, his old manservant, he struggled for breath to bid him take care of his mistress and her two daughters, as if the one reasonable being in the house were this Alsacian Caleb Balderstone.

"Three years afterward, in 1826, Isaure was twenty years old, and Malvina still unmarried. Malvina had gone into society, and in course of time discovered for herself how superficial their friendships were, how accurately every one was weighed and appraised. Like most girls that have been 'well brought up,' as we say, Malvina had no idea of the mechanism of life, of the importance of money, of the difficulty of obtaining it, of the prices of things. And so, for six years, every lesson that she had learned had been a painful one for her.

"D'Aldrigger's four hundred thousand francs were carried to the credit of the baroness' account with the firm of Nucingen (she was her husband's creditor for twelve hundred thousand francs under her marriage-settlement), and when in any difficulty the Shepherdess of the Alps dipped into her capital as though it were inexhaustible.

"When our pigeon first advanced toward his dove, Nucingen, knowing the baroness' character, must have spoken

plainly to Malvina on the financial position. At that time three hundred thousand francs were left; the income of twenty-four thousand francs was reduced to eighteen thousand. Wirth had kept up this state of things for three years! After that confidential interview, Malvina put down the carriage, sold the horses, and dismissed the coachman, without her mother's knowledge. The furniture, now ten years old, could not be renewed, but it all faded together, and for those that like harmony the effect was not half bad. The baroness herself, that so well-preserved flower, began to look like the last solitary frost-touched rose on a November bush. I myself watched the slow decline of luxury by quarter-tones and semitones! Frightful, upon my honor! It was my last trouble of the kind; afterward I said to myself, 'It is silly to care so much about other people.' But while I was in the civil service, I was fool enough to take a personal interest in the houses where I dined; I used to stand up for them; I would say no ill of them myself; I—oh! I was a child.

"Well, when the erstwhile pearl's daughter put the state of the case before her, 'Oh, my poor children,' cried she, 'who will make my dresses now? I cannot afford new bonnets; I cannot see visitors here nor go out.' Now by what token do you know that a man is in love?" said Bixiou, interrupting himself. "The question is, whether Beaudenord was genuinely in love with the fair-haired girl."

"He neglects his interests," said Couture.

"He changes his shirt three times a day," from Finot.

"There is another question to settle first," opined Blondet; "a man of more than ordinary ability, can he, and ought he, to fall in love?"

"My friends," resumed Bixiou, with a sentimental air, "there is a kind of man who, when he feels that he is in peril of falling in love, will snap his fingers or fling away his cigar (as the case may be) with a 'Pooh! there are other women in the world.' Beware of that man for a dangerous reptile.

Still, the Government may employ that citizen somewhere in the foreign office. Blondet, I call your attention to the fact that this Godefroid had thrown up diplomacy."

"Well, he was absorbed," said Blondet. "Love gives the fool his one chance of growing great."

"Blondet, Blondet, how is it that we are so poor?" cried Bixiou.

"And why is Finot so rich?" returned Blondet. "I will tell you how it is; there, my son, we understand each other. Come, here is Finot filling up my glass as if I had carried in his firewood. At the end of dinner one ought to sip one's wine slowly. Well?"

"Thou hast said. The absorbed Godefroid became fully acquainted with the family—the tall Malvina, the frivolous baroness, and the little lady of the dance. He became a servant after the most conscientious and restricted fashion. He was not scared away by the cadaverous remains of opulence; not he! by degrees he became accustomed to the threadbare condition of things. It never struck the young man that the green silk damask and white ornaments in the drawing-room were shabby, spotted, and old-fashioned, and that the room needed refurnishing. The curtains, the tea-table, the knick-knacks on the chimney-piece, the rococo chandelier, the Eastern carpet with the pile worn down to the thread, the pianoforte, the little flowered china cups, the fringed serviettes so full of holes that they looked like open work in the Spanish fashion, the green sitting-room with the baroness' blue bedroom beyond it—it was all sacred, all dear to him. It is only your stupid woman with the brilliant beauty that throws heart, brain, and soul into the shade, who can inspire forgetfulness like this; a clever woman never abuses her advantages; she must be small-natured and silly to gain such a hold upon a man. Beaudenord actually loved the solemn old Wirth—he has told me so himself!

"That old rogue regarded his future master with the awe

which a good Catholic feels for the eucharist. Honest Wirth was a kind of Gaspard, a beer-drinking German sheathing his cunning in good-nature, much as a cardinal in the Middle Ages kept his dagger up his sleeve. Wirth saw a husband for Isaure, and accordingly proceeded to surround Godefroid with the mazy circumlocutions of his Alsacian geniality, that most adhesive of all known varieties of bird-lime.

"Mme. d'Aldrigger was radically 'improper.' She thought love the most natural thing imaginable. When Isaure and Malvina went out together to the Champs Élysées or the Tuileries, where they were sure to meet the young men of their set, she would simply say, 'A pleasant time to you, dear girls.' Their friends among men, the only persons who might have slandered the sisters, championed them; for the extraordinary liberty permitted in the d'Aldriggers' salon made it unique in Paris. Vast wealth would scarcely have procured such evenings, the talk was good on any subject; dress was not insisted upon; you felt so much at home there that you could ask for supper. The sisters corresponded as they pleased, and quietly read their letters by their mother's side; it never occurred to the baroness to interfere in any way; the adorable woman gave the girls the full benefits of her selfishness, and in a certain sense selfish persons are the easiest to live with; they hate trouble, and therefore do not trouble other people; they never beset the lives of their fellow-creatures with thorny advice and captious fault-finding; nor do they torment you with the waspish solicitude of excessive affection that must know all things and rule all things——"

"This comes home," said Blondet, "but, my dear fellow, this is not telling a story, this is *blague* (fudge)——"

"Blondet, if you were not tipsy, I should really feel hurt! He is the one serious literary character among us; for his benefit, I honor you by treating you like men of taste, I am distilling my tale for you, and now he criticises me! There is no greater proof of intellectual sterility, my friends, than

the piling up of facts. 'Le Misanthrope,' that supreme comedy, shows us that art consists in the power of building a palace on a needle's point. The gist of my idea is in the fairy wand which can turn the Desert into an Interlaken in ten seconds (precisely the time required to empty this glass). Would you rather that I fired a story off at you like a cannon-ball, or a commander-in-chief's report? We chat and laugh; and this journalist, a bibliophobe when sober, expects me, forsooth, when he is drunk, to teach my tongue to move at the dull jog-trot of a printed book." (Here he affected to weep.) "Woe unto the French imagination when men fain would blunt the needle-points of her pleasant humor! *Dies iræ!* Let us weep for Candide. Long live the 'Kritik of Pure Reason,' 'La Symbolique,' and the systems in five closely packed volumes, printed by Germans, who little suspect that the gist of the matter has been known in Paris since 1750, and crystallized in a few trenchant words—the diamonds of our national thought. Blondet is driving a hearse to his own suicide; Blondet, forsooth! who manufactures newspaper accounts of the last words of all the great men that die without saying anything!"

"Come, get on," put in Finot.

"It was my intention to explain to you in what the happiness of a man consists when he is not a shareholder (out of compliment to Couture). Well, now, do you not see at what a price Godefroid secured the greatest happiness of a young man's dream? He was trying to understand Isaure, by way of making sure that she should understand him. Things which comprehend one another must needs be similar. Infinity and Nothingness, for instance, are like; everything that lies between the two is like neither. Nothingness is stupidity; genius, Infinity. The lovers wrote each other the stupidest letters imaginable, putting down various expressions then in fashion upon bits of scented paper: 'Angel! Æolian harp! with thee I shall be complete! There is a heart in my man's

breast! Weak woman, poor me!' all the latest heart-frippery. It was Godefroid's wont to stay in a drawing-room for a bare ten minutes; he talked without any pretension to the women in it, and at those times they thought him very clever. In short, judge of his absorption; Joby, his horses and carriages, became secondary interests in his life. He was never happy except in the depths of a snug settee opposite the baroness, by the dark-green porphyry chimney-piece, watching Isaure, taking tea, and chatting with the little circle of friends that dropped in every evening between eleven and twelve in the Rue Joubert. You could play bouillotte there safely. (I always won.) Isaure sat with one little foot thrust out in its black satin shoe; Godefroid would gaze and gaze, and stay till every one else was gone, then say, 'Give me your shoe!' and Isaure would put her little foot on a chair and take it off and give it to him, with a glance, one of those glances that—in short, you understand.

"At length Godefroid discovered a great mystery in Malvina. Whenever du Tillet knocked at the door, the live red that colored Malvina's face said 'Ferdinand!' When the poor girl's eyes fell on that two-footed tiger, they lighted up like a brasier fanned by a current of air. When Ferdinand drew her away to the window or a side-table, she betrayed her secret infinite joy. It is a rare and beautiful thing to see a woman so much in love that she loses her cunning to be strange, and you can read her heart; as rare (dear me!) in Paris as the Singing Flower in the Indies. But in spite of a friendship dating from the d'Aldriggers' first appearance at the Nucingens', Ferdinand did not marry Malvina. Our ferocious friend was not apparently jealous of Desroches, who paid assiduous court to the young lady; Desroches wanted to pay off the rest of the purchase-money due for his connection; Malvina could not well have less than fifty thousand crowns, he thought, and so the lawyer was fain to play the lover. Malvina, deeply humiliated as she was by du Tillet's careless-

ISAURE WOULD PUT HER LITTLE FOOT ON A CHAIR.

ness, loved him too well to shut the door upon him. With her, an enthusiastic, highly wrought, sensitive girl, love sometimes got the better of pride, and pride again overcame wounded love. Our friend Ferdinand, cool and self-possessed, accepted her tenderness, and breathed the atmosphere with the quiet enjoyment of a tiger licking the blood that dyes his throat. He would come to make sure of it with new proofs; he never allowed two days to pass without a visit to the Rue Joubert.

"At that time the rascal possessed something like eighteen hundred thousand francs; money must have weighed very little with him in the question of marriage; and he had not merely been proof against Malvina, he had resisted the Barons de Nucingen and de Rastignac; though both of them had set him galloping at the rate or seventy-five leagues a day, with outriders, regardless of expense, through mazes of their cunning devices—and with never a clue of thread.

"Godefroid could not refrain from saying a word to his future sister-in-law as to her ridiculous position between a banker and an attorney.

"'You mean to read me a lecture on the subject of Ferdinand,' she said frankly, 'to know the secret between us. Dear Godefroid, never mention this again. Ferdinand's birth, antecedents, and fortune count for nothing in this, so you may think it is something extraordinary.' A few days afterward, however, Malvina took Godefroid apart to say, 'I do not think that Desroches is sincere' (such is the instinct of love); 'he would like to marry me, and he is paying court to some tradesman's daughter as well. I should very much like to know whether I am a second shift, and whether marriage is a matter of money with him.' The fact was that Desroches, deep as he was, could not make out du Tillet, and was afraid that he might marry Malvina. So the fellow had secured his retreat. His position was intolerable, he was scarcely paying his expenses and interest on the debt. Women understand

nothing of these things; for them, love is always a millionaire."

"But since neither du Tillet nor Desroches married her, just explain Ferdinand's motive," said Finot.

"Motive?" repeated Bixiou; "why, this. General Rule: A girl that has once given away her slipper, even if she refused it for ten years, is never married by the man who——"

"Bosh!" interrupted Blondet, "one reason for loving is the fact that one has loved. His motive? Here it is. General Rule: Do not marry as a sergeant when some day you may be Duke of Dantzig and Marshal of France. Now, see what a match du Tillet has made since then. He married one of the Comte de Granville's daughters, into one of the oldest families in the French magistracy."

"Desroches' mother had a friend, a druggist's wife," continued Bixiou. "Said druggist had retired with a fat fortune. These druggist folk have absurdly crude notions; by way of giving his daughter a good education, he had sent her to a boarding-school! Well, Matifat meant the girl to marry well, on the strength of two hundred thousand francs, good hard coin with no scent of drugs about it."

"Florine's Matifat?" asked Blondet.

"Well, yes. Lousteau's Matifat; ours, in fact. The Matifats, even then lost to us, had gone to live in the Rue du Cherche-Midi, as far as may be from the Rue des Lombards, where their money was made. For my own part, I had cultivated those Matifats. While I served my time in the galleys of the law, when I was cooped up for eight hours out of the twenty-four with nincompoops of the first water, I saw queer characters enough to convince myself that all is not dead-level even in obscure places, and that in the flattest inanity you may chance upon an angle. Yes, dear boy, such and such a philistine is to such another as Rafael is to Natoire.

"Madame Desroches, the widowed mother, had long ago planned this marriage for her son, in spite of a tremendous

obstacle which took the shape of one Cochin, Matifat's partner's son, a young clerk in the audit department. M. and Mme. Matifat were of the opinion that an attorney's position 'gave some guarantee for a wife's happiness,' to use their own expression; and as for Desroches, he was prepared to fall in with his mother's views in case he could do no better for himself. Wherefore, he kept up his acquaintance with the druggists in the Rue du Cherche-Midi.

"To put another kind of happiness before you, you should have a description of these storekeepers, male and female. They rejoiced in the possession of a handsome first-floor and a strip of garden; for amusement, they watched a little squirt of water, no bigger than a wheat-stalk, perpetually rising and falling upon a small, round freestone slab in the middle of a basin some six feet across; they would rise early of a morning to see if the plants in the garden had grown in the night; they had nothing to do, they were restless, they dressed for the sake of dressing, bored themselves at the theatre, and were for ever going to and fro between Paris and Luzarches, where they had a country house. I have dined there.

"Once they tried to quiz me, Blondet. I told them a long-winded story that lasted from nine o'clock till midnight, one tale inside another. I had just brought my twenty-ninth personage upon the scene (the newspapers have plagiarized with their 'continued in our next'), when old Matifat, who as host still held out, snored like the rest, after blinking for five minutes. Next day they all complimented me upon the ending of my tale!

"These tradespeople's society consisted of M. and Mme. Cochin, Mme. Desroches, and a young Popinot, still in the drug business, who used to bring them news of the Rue des Lombards. (You know him, Finot.) Mme. Matifat loved the arts; she bought lithographs, chromo-lithographs, and colored prints—all the cheapest things she could lay her hands on. The Sieur Matifat amused himself by looking into new

business speculations, investing a little capital now and again for the sake of the excitement. Florine had cured him of his taste for the Regency style of thing. One saying of his will give you some idea of the depths in my Matifat. 'Art *thou* going to bed, my nieces?' he used to say when he wished them good-night, because (as he explained) he was afraid of hurting their feelings with the more formal 'you.'

"The daughter was a girl with no manner at all. She looked rather like a superior sort of housemaid. She could get through a sonata, she wrote a pretty English hand, knew French grammar and orthography—a complete commercial education, in short. She was impatient enough to be married and leave the paternal roof, finding it as dull at home as a lieutenant finds the night-watch at sea; at the same time, it should be said that her watch lasted through the whole twenty-four hours. Desroches or Cochin junior, a notary or a life-guardsman, or a sham English lord—any husband would have suited her. As she so obviously knew nothing of life, I took pity upon her, I determined to reveal the great secret of it. But, pooh! the Matifats shut their doors on me. The bourgeois and I shall never understand each other."

"She married General Gouraud," said Finot.

"In forty-eight hours, Godefroid de Beaudenord, late of the diplomatic corps, saw through the Matifats and their nefarious designs," resumed Bixiou. "Rastignac happened to be chatting with the frivolous baroness when Godefroid came in to give his report to Malvina. A word here and there reached his ear; he guessed the matter on foot, more particularly from Malvina's look of satisfaction that it was as she had suspected. Then Rastignac actually stopped on till two o'clock in the morning. And yet there are those that call him selfish! Beaudenord took his departure when the baroness went to bed.

"As soon as Rastignac was left alone with Malvina, he spoke in a quiet, fatherly, good-humored fashion: 'Dear child,

please to bear in mind that a poor fellow, heavy with sleep, has been drinking tea to keep himself awake till two o'clock in the morning, all for a chance of saying a solemn word of advice to you—*Marry!* Do not be too particular; do not brood over your feelings; never mind the sordid schemes of men that have one foot here and another in the Matifats' house; do not stop to think at all: Marry! When a girl marries, it means that the man whom she marries undertakes to maintain her in a more or less good position in life, and at any rate her comfort is assured. I know the world. Girls, mammas, and grandmammas are all of them hypocrites when they fly off into sentiment over a question of marriage. Nobody really thinks of anything but a good position. If a mother marries her daughter well, she says that she has made an excellent bargain.' Here Rastignac unfolded his theory of marriage, which to his way of thinking is a business arrangement, with a view to making life tolerable; and ended up with, 'I do not ask to know your secret, Malvina; I know it already. Men talk things over among themselves, just as you women talk after you leave the dinner-table. This is all I have to say: Marry. If you do not, remember that I begged you to marry, here, in this room, this evening!'

"There was a certain ring in Rastignac's voice which compelled, not attention, but reflection. There was something startling in his insistence; something that went, as Rastignac meant that it should, to the quick of Malvina's intelligence. She thought over the counsel again next day, and vainly asked herself why it had been given."

Couture broke in. "In all these tops that you have set spinning, I see nothing at all like the beginnings of Rastignac's fortune," said he. "You apparently take us for Matifats multiplied by half-a-dozen bottles of champagne."

"We are just coming to it," returned Bixiou. "You have followed the course of all the rivulets which make up that forty thousand livres a year which so many people envy. By this

time Rastignac held the threads of all these lives in his hand."

"Desroches, the Matifats, Beaudenord, the d'Aldriggers and d'Aiglemont?"

"Yes, and a hundred others," assented Bixiou.

"Come now, how?" cried Finot. "I know a few things, but I cannot see a glimpse of an answer to this riddle."

"Blondet has roughly given you the account of Nucingen's first two suspensions of payment; now for the third, with full details. After the peace of 1815, Nucingen grasped an idea which some of us only fully understood later, to wit, that capital is a power only when you are very much richer than other people. In his own mind, he was jealous of the Rothschilds. He had five millions of francs, he wanted ten. He knew a way to make thirty millions with ten, while with five he could only make fifteen. So he made up his mind to operate a third suspension of payment. About that time, the great man hit on the idea of indemnifying his creditors with paper of purely fictitious value and keeping their coin. On the market, a great idea of this sort is not expressed in precisely this cut-and-dried way. Such an arrangement consists in giving a lot of grown-up children a small pie in exchange for a gold-piece; and, like children of a smaller growth, they prefer the pie to the gold-piece, not suspecting that they might have a couple of hundred pies for it."

"What is all this about, Bixiou?" cried Couture. "Nothing more *bonâ fide*. Not a week passes but pies are offered to the public for a louis. But who compels the public to take them? Are they not perfectly free to make inquiries?"

"You would rather have it made compulsory to take up shares, would you?" asked Blondet.

"No," said Finot. "Where would the talent come in?"

"Very good for Finot."

"Who put him up to it?" asked Couture.

"The fact was," continued Bixiou, "that Nucingen had

twice had the luck to present the public (quite unintentionally) with a pie that turned out to be worth more than the money he received for it. That unlucky good-luck gave him qualms of conscience. A course of such luck is fatal to a man in the long run. This time he meant to make no mistake of this sort; he waited ten years for an opportunity of issuing negotiable securities which should seem on the face of it to be worth something, while as a matter of fact——"

"But if you look at banking in that light," broke in Couture, "no sort of business would be possible. More than one *bonâ fide* banker, backed up by a *bonâ fide* government, has induced the hardest-headed men on 'Change to take up stock which was bound to fall within a given time. You have seen better than that. Have you not seen stock created with the concurrence of a government to pay the interest upon older stock, so as to keep things going and tide over the difficulty? These operations were more or less like Nucingen's settlements."

"The thing may look queer on a small scale," said Blondet, "but on a large we call it finance. There are high-handed proceedings criminal between man and man that amount to nothing when spread out over any number of men, much as a drop of prussic acid becomes harmless in a pail of water. You take a man's life, you are guillotined. But if, for any political conviction whatsoever, you take five hundred lives, political crimes are respected. You take five thousand francs out of my desk; to the hulks you go. But with a sop cleverly pushed into the jaws of a thousand speculators, you can cram the stock of any bankrupt republic or monarchy down their throats; even if the loan has been floated, as Couture says, to pay the interest on that very same national debt. Nobody can complain. These are the real principles of the present Golden Age."

"When the stage machinery is so huge," continued Bixiou, "a good many puppets are required. In the first place,

Nucingen had purposely and with his eyes open invested his five millions in an American investment, foreseeing that the profits would not come in until it was too late. The firm of Nucingen deliberately emptied its coffers. Any liquidation ought to be brought about naturally. In deposits belonging to private individuals and other investments, the firm possessed about six millions of capital altogether. Among those private individuals were the Baroness d'Aldrigger with her three hundred thousand francs, Beaudenord with four hundred thousand, d'Aiglemont with a million, Matifat with three hundred thousand, Charles Grandet (who married Mlle. d'Aubrion) with half a million, and so forth, and so forth.

"Now, if Nucingen had himself brought out a joint-stock company, with the shares of which he proposed to indemnify his creditors after more or less ingenious manœuvring, he might perhaps have been suspected. He set about it more cunningly than that. He made some one else put up the machinery that was to play the part of the Mississippi scheme in Law's system. Nucingen can make the longest-headed men work out his schemes for him without confiding a word to them; it is his peculiar talent. Nucingen just let fall a hint to du Tillet of the pyramidal, triumphant notion of bringing out a joint-stock enterprise with capital sufficient to pay very high dividends for a time. Tried for the first time, in days when noodles with capital were plentiful, the plan was pretty sure to end in a run upon the shares, and consequently in a profit for the banker that issued them. You must remember that this happened in 1826.

"Du Tillet, struck though he was by an idea both pregnant and ingenious, naturally bethought himself that if the enterprise failed, the blame must fall upon somebody. For which reason, it occurred to him to put forward a figurehead director in charge of his commercial machinery. At this day you all must know the secret of the firm of Claparon and Company, founded by du Tillet, one of the finest inventions——"

"Yes," said Blondet, "the responsible editor in business matters, the instigator, and scapegoat; but we know better than that nowadays. We put, 'Apply at the offices of the Company, such-and-such a number, such-and-such a street,' where the public finds a staff of clerks in green caps, about as pleasing to behold as broker's men."

"Nucingen," pursued Bixiou, "had supported the firm of Charles Claparon and Company with all his credit. There were markets in which you mighty safely put a million francs' worth of Claparon's paper. So du Tillet proposed to bring his firm of Claparon to the fore. So said, so done. In 1825 the shareholder was still an unsophisticated being. There was no such thing as cash lying at call. Managing directors did not pledge themselves not to put their own shares upon the market; they kept no deposit with the Bank of France; they guaranteed nothing. They did not even condescend to explain to shareholders the exact limits of their liabilities when they informed them that the directors, in their goodness, refrained from asking any more than a thousand, or five hundred, or even two hundred and fifty francs. It was not given out that the experiment *in ære publico* was not meant to last for more than seven, five, or even three years, so that shareholders would not have long to wait for the catastrophe. It was in the childhood of the art. Promoters did not even publish the gigantic prospectuses with which they stimulate the imagination, and at the same time make demands for money of all and sundry."

"That only comes when nobody wishes to part with money," said Couture.

"In short, there was no competition in investments," continued Bixiou. "Papier-mâché manufacturers, cotton printers, zinc-rollers, theatres, and newspapers as yet did not hurl themselves like hunting dogs upon their quarry—the expiring shareholder. 'Nice things in shares,' as Couture says, put thus artlessly before the public, and backed up by the opinions of

experts ('the princes of science'), were negotiated shamefacedly in the silence and shadow of the Bourse. Lynx-eyed speculators used to execute (financially speaking) the aria Calumny out of 'The Barber of Seville.' They went about *piano, piano,* making known the merits of the concern through the medium of stock-exchange gossip. They could only exploit the victim in his own house, on the Bourse, or in company; so they reached him by means of the skillfully created rumor which grew till it reached a *tutti* of a quotation in four figures——"

"And as we can say anything among ourselves," said Couture, "I will go back to the last subject."

"*Vous êtes orfevre, Monsieur Josse!*"* cried Finot.

"Finot will always be classic, constitutional, and pedantic," commented Blondet.

"Yes," rejoined Couture, on whose account Cérizet had just been condemned on a criminal charge. "I maintain that the new way is infinitely less fraudulent, less ruinous, more straightforward than the old. Publicity means time for reflection and inquiry. If here and there a shareholder is taken in, he has himself to blame, nobody sells him a pig in a poke. The manufacturing industry——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Bixiou, "here comes industry——"

"—is a gainer by it," continued Couture, taking no notice of the interruption. "Every government that meddles with commerce and cannot leave it free, sets about an expensive piece of folly; State interference ends in a *maximum* or a monopoly. To my thinking, few things can be more in conformity with the principles of free trade than joint-stock companies. State interference means that you try to regulate the relations of principal and interest, which is absurd. In business, generally speaking, the profits are in proportion to the risks. What does it matter to the State how money is set circulating, provided that it is always in circulation? What

* You are a goldsmith, Mister Joss.

does it matter who is rich or who is poor, provided that there is a constant quantity of rich people to be taxed? Joint-stock companies, limited liability companies, every sort of enterprise that pays a dividend, has been carried on for twenty years in England, commercially the first country in the world. Nothing passes unchallenged there; the Houses of Parliament hatch some twelve hundred laws every session, yet no member of Parliament has ever yet raised an objection to the system——"

"A cure for plethora of the strong box. Purely vegetable remedy," put in Bixiou, "*les carottes*" (gambling speculation).

"Look here!" cried Couture, firing up at this. "You have ten thousand francs. You invest it in ten shares of a thousand francs each in ten different enterprises. You are swindled nine times out of the ten—as a matter of fact you are not, the public is a match for anybody, but say that you are swindled, and only one affair turns out well (by accident! oh, granted! it was not done on purpose—there, chaff away!). Very well, the punter that has the sense to divide up his stakes in this way hits on a splendid investment, like those did who took shares in the Worstchin mines. Gentlemen, let us admit among ourselves that those who call out are hypocrites, desperately vexed because they have no good ideas of their own, and neither power to advertise nor skill to exploit a business. You will not have long to wait for proof. In a very short time you will see the aristocracy, the Court, and public men descend into speculation in serried columns; you will see that their claws are longer, their morality more crooked than ours, while they have not our good points. What a head a man must have if he has to found a business in times when the shareholder is as covetous and keen as the inventor! What a great magnetizer must he be that can create a Claparon and hit upon expedients never tried before. Do you know the moral of it all? Our age is no better than we are; we live in an era

of greed; no one troubles himself about the intrinsic value of a thing if he can only make a profit on it by selling it to somebody else; so he passes it on to his neighbor. The shareholder that thinks he sees a chance of making money is just as covetous as the founder that offers him the opportunity of making it."

"Isn't he fine, our Couture? Isn't he fine?" exclaimed Bixiou, turning to Blondet. "He will ask us next to erect statues to him as a benefactor of the species."

"It would certainly lead people to conclude that the fool's money is the wise man's patrimony by divine right," said Blondet.

"Gentlemen," cried Couture, "let us have our laugh out here to make up for all the times when we must listen gravely to solemn nonsense justifying laws passed on the spur of the moment."

"He is right," said Blondet. "What times we live in, gentlemen! When the fire of intelligence appears among us, it is promptly quenched by haphazard legislation. Almost all our lawgivers come up from little parishes where they studied human nature through the medium of the newspapers; forthwith they shut down the safety-valve, and when the machinery blows up there is weeping and gnashing of teeth! We do nothing nowadays but pass penal laws and levy taxes. Will you have the sum of it all? There is no religion left in the State!"

"Oh, bravo, Blondet!" cried Bixiou, "thou hast set thy finger on the weak spot. Meddlesome taxation has lost us more victories here in France than the vexatious chances of war. I once spent seven years in the hulks of a government department, chained with bourgeois to my bench. There was a clerk in the office, a man with a head on his shoulders; he had set his mind upon making a sweeping reform of the whole fiscal system—ah, well, we took the conceit out of him nicely. France might have been too prosperous, you know; she might

have amused herself by conquering Europe again; we acted in the interests of the peace of nations. I slew Rabourdin with a caricature."*

"By *religion* I do not mean cant; I use the word in its wide political sense," rejoined Blondet.

"Explain your meaning," said Finot.

"Here it is," returned Blondet. "There has been a good deal said about affairs at Lyons; about the Republic cannonaded in the streets; well, there was not a word of truth in it all. The Republic took up the riots, just as an insurgent snatches up a rifle. The truth is queer and profound, I can tell you. The Lyons trade is a soulless trade. They will not weave a yard of silk unless they have the order and are sure of payment. If orders fall off, the workmen may starve; they can scarcely earn a living, convicts are better off. After the Revolution of July, the distress reached such a pitch that the Lyons weavers—the *canuts*, as they call them—hoisted the flag, 'Bread or Death!' a proclamation of a kind which compels the attention of a government. It was really brought about by the cost of living at Lyons; Lyons must build theatres and become a metropolis, forsooth, and the octroi† duties accordingly were insanely high. The Republicans got wind of this bread riot, they organized the *canuts* in two camps, and fought among themselves. Lyons had her Three Days, but order was restored, and the silk weavers went back to their dens. Hitherto the *canut* had been honest; the silk for his work was weighed out to him in hanks, and he brought back the same weight of woven tissue; now he made up his mind that the silk merchants were oppressing him; he put honesty out at the door and rubbed oil on his fingers. He still brought back weight for weight, but he sold the silk represented by the oil; and the French silk trade has suffered from a plague of 'greased silks,' which might have ruined Lyons and a whole branch of French commerce. The masters and the

* See "The Workpeople." † Dues collected at the city gates.

Government, instead of removing the causes of the evil, simply drove it in with a violent external application. They ought to have sent a clever man to Lyons, one of those men that are said to have no principle, an Abbé Terray; but they looked at the affair from a military point of view. The result of the troubles is a *gros de Naples* at forty *sous* per yard; the silk is sold at this day, I dare say, and the masters no doubt have hit upon some new check upon the men. This method of manufacturing without looking ahead ought never to have existed in the country where one of the greatest citizens that France has ever known ruined himself to keep six thousand weavers in work without orders. Richard Lenoir fed them, and the Government was thick-headed enough to allow him to suffer from the fall of the prices of textile fabrics brought about by the Revolution of 1814. Richard Lenoir is the one case of a merchant that deserves a statue. And yet the subscription set on foot for him has no subscribers, while the fund for General Foy's children reached a million francs. Lyons has drawn her own conclusions; she knows France, she knows that there is no religion left. The story of Richard Lenior is one of those blunders which Fouché condemned as worse than a crime."

"Suppose that there is a tinge of charlatanism in the way in which concerns are put before the public," began Couture, returning to the charge, "that word charlatanism has come to be a damaging expression, a middle term, as it were, between right and wrong; for where, I ask you, does charlatanism begin? where does it end? what is charlatanism? do me the kindness of telling me what it is *not*. Now for a little plain speaking, the rarest social ingredient. A business which should consist in going out at night to look for goods to sell in the day would be obviously impossible. You find the instinct of forestalling the market in the very match-seller. How to forestall the market—that is the one idea of the so-called honest tradesman of the Rue Saint-Denis, as of the

most brazen-fronted speculator. If stocks are heavy, sell you must. If sales are slow, you must tickle your customer; hence the signs of the Middle Ages, hence the modern prospectus. I do not see a hair's-breadth of difference between attracting custom and forcing your goods upon the consumer. It may happen, it is sure to happen, it often happens, that a storekeeper gets hold of damaged goods, for the seller always cheats the buyer. Go and ask the most upright folk in Paris —the best-known men in business, that is—and they will all triumphantly tell you of dodges by which they passed off stock which they knew to be bad upon the public. The well-known firm of Minard began by sales of this kind. In the Rue Saint-Denis they sell nothing but 'greased silk;' it is all that they can do. The most honest merchants tell you in the most candid way that 'you must get out of a bad bargain as best you can'—a motto for the most unscrupulous rascality. Blondet has given you an account of the Lyons affair, its causes and effects, and I proceed in my turn to illustrate my theory with an anecdote: There was once a woolen weaver, an ambitious man, burdened with a large family of children by a wife too much beloved. He put too much faith in the Republic, laid in a stock of scarlet wool, and manufactured those red-knitted caps that you may have noticed on the heads of all the street urchins in Paris. How this came about I am just going to tell you. The Republic was beaten. After the Saint-Merri affair the caps were quite unsalable. Now, when a weaver finds that beside a wife and children he has some ten thousand red woolen caps in the house, and that no hatter will take a single one of them, notions begin to pass through his head as fast as if he were a banker racking his brains to get rid of ten million francs' worth of shares in some dubious investment. As for this Law of the Faubourg, this Nucingen of caps, do you know what he did? He went to find a pothouse dandy, one of those comic men that drive police sergeants to despair at open-air dancing saloons at the

barriers; him he engaged to play the part of an American captain staying at Meurice's and buying for the export trade. He was to go to some large hatter, who still had a cap in his store-window, and 'inquire for' ten thousand red woolen caps. The hatter, scenting business in the wind, hurried round to the woolen weaver and rushed upon the stock. After that, no more of the American captain, you understand, and great plenty of caps. If you interfere with the freedom of trade, because free trade has its drawbacks, you might as well tie the hands of justice because a crime sometimes goes unpunished, or blame the bad organization of society because civilization produces some evils. From the caps and the Rue Saint-Denis to joint-stock companies and the bank—draw your own conclusions."

"A crown for Couture!" said Blondet, twisting a serviette into a wreath for his head. "I go further than that, gentlemen. If there is a defect in the working hypothesis, what is the cause? The law! the whole system of legislation. The blame rests with the legislature. The great men of their districts are sent up to us by the provinces, crammed with parochial notions of right and wrong; and ideas that are indispensable if you want to keep clear of collisions with justice, are stupid when they prevent a man from rising to the height at which a maker of laws ought to abide. Legislation may prohibit such and such developments of human passions—gambling, lotteries, the Ninons of the pavement, anything you please—but you cannot extirpate the passions themselves by any amount of legislation. Abolish them, you would abolish the society which develops them, even if it does not produce them. The gambling passion lurks, for instance, at the bottom of every heart, be it a girl's heart, a provincial's, a diplomatist's; everybody longs to have money without working for it; you may hedge the desire about with restrictions, but the gambling mania immediately breaks out in another form. You stupidly suppress lotteries, but the cook-

maid pilfers none the less, and puts her ill-gotten gains in the savings bank. She gambles with two hundred and fifty franc stakes instead of forty sous; joint-stock companies and speculation take the place of the lottery; the gambling goes on without the green cloth, the croupier's rake is invisible, the cheating planned beforehand. The gambling-houses are closed, the lottery has come to an end; 'and now,' cry idiots, 'morals have greatly improved in France,' as if, forsooth, they had suppressed the punters. The gambling still goes on, only the State makes nothing from it now; and for a tax paid with pleasure, it has substituted a burdensome duty. Nor is the number of suicides reduced, for the gambler never dies, though his victim does.

"I am not speaking now of foreign capital lost to France," continued Couture, "nor of the Frankfort lotteries. The Convention passed a decree of death against these who hawked foreign lottery-tickets, and procureur syndics used to traffic in them. So much for the sense of our legislator and his driveling philanthropy. The encouragement given to savings banks is a piece of crass political folly. Suppose that things take a doubtful turn and people lose confidence, the Government will find that they have instituted a queue for money, like the queues outside the bakers' shops. So many savings banks, so many riots. Three streets boys hoist a flag in some corner or other, and you have a revolution ready made.

"But this danger, however great it may be, seems to me less to be dreaded than the widespread demoralization. Savings banks are a means of inoculating the people, the classes least restrained by education or by reason from schemes that are tacitly criminal with the vices bred of self-interest. See what comes of philanthropy!

"A great politician ought to be without a conscience in abstract questions, or he is a bad steersman for a nation. An honest politician is a steam-engine with feelings, a pilot that would make love at the helm and let the ship go down. A

prime minister who helps himself to millions but makes France prosperous and great is preferable, is he not, to a public servant who ruins his country, even though he is buried at the public expense? Would you hesitate between a Richelieu, a Mazarin, or a Potemkin, each with his hundreds of millions of francs, and a conscientious Robert Lindet* that could make nothing out of *assignats* (paper money) and national property, or one of the virtuous imbeciles who ruined Louis XVI.? Go on, Bixiou."

"I will not go into the details of the speculation which we owe to Nucingen's financial genius. It would be the more inexpedient because the concern is still in existence and shares are quoted on the Bourse. The scheme was so convincing, there was such life in an enterprise sanctioned by royal letters-patent, that, though the shares issued at a thousand francs fell to three hundred, they rose to seven, and will reach par yet, after weathering the stormy years '27, '30, and '32. The financial crisis of 1827 sent them down; after the Revolution of July they fell flat; but there is really something in the affair, Nucingen simply could not invent a bad speculation. In short, as several banks of the highest standing have been mixed up in the affair, it would be unparliamentary to go further into detail. The nominal capital amounted to ten millions; the real capital to seven. Three millions were allotted to the founders and bankers that brought it out. Everything was done with a view to sending up the shares two hundred francs during the first six months by the payment of a sham dividend. Twenty per cent. on ten millions! Du Tillet's interest in the concern amounted to five hundred thousand francs. In the stock-exchange slang of the day, this share of the spoils was a 'sop in the pan.' Nucingen, with his millions made by the aid of a lithographer's stone and a handful of pink paper, proposed to himself to operate certain nice little shares carefully hoarded in his private office

* Minister of Finance of the Republic.

till the time came for putting them on the market. The shareholder's money floated the concern, and paid for splendid business premises, so they began operations. And Nucingen held in reserve founders' shares in heaven knows what coal and argentiferous lead-mines, also in a couple of canals; the shares had been given to him for bringing out the concerns. All four were in working order, well gotten up and popular, for they paid good dividends.

"Nucingen might, of course, count on getting the differences if the shares went up, but this formed no part of the baron's schemes; he left the shares at sea-level on the market to tempt the fishes.

"So he had massed his securities as Napoleon massed his troops, all with a view to suspending payment in the thick of the approaching crisis of 1826-27 which revolutionized European markets. If Nucingen had had his Prince of Wagram, he might have said, like Napoleon from the heights of Santon, 'Make a careful survey of the situation; on such and such a day, at such an hour, funds will be poured in at such a spot.' But in whom could he confide? Du Tillet had no suspicion of his own complicity in Nucingen's plot; and the bold baron had learned from his previous experiments in suspensions of payment that he must have some man whom he could trust to act at need as a lever upon the creditor. Nucingen had never a nephew, he dared not take a confidant; yet he must have a devoted and intelligent Claparon, a born diplomatist with a good manner, a man worthy of him, and fit to take office under Government. Such connections are not made in a day nor yet in a year. By this time Rastignac had been so thoroughly entangled by Nucingen, that being, like the Prince de la Paix, equally beloved by the King and Queen of Spain, he fancied that he (Rastignac) had secured a very valuable dupe in *Nucingen!* For a long while he had laughed at a man whose capacities he was unable to estimate; he ended in a sober, serious, and devout admiration of Nucin-

gen, owning that Nucingen really had the power which he thought that he himself alone possessed.

"From Rastignac's introduction to society in Paris, he had been led to contemn it utterly. From the year 1820 he thought, like the baron, that honesty was a question of appearances; he looked upon the world as a mixture of corruption and rascality of every sort. If he admitted exceptions, he condemned the mass; he put no belief in any virtue —men did right or wrong, as circumstances decided. His worldly wisdom was the work of a moment; he learned his lesson at the summit of Père Lachaise one day when he buried a poor, good man there; it was his Delphine's father, who died deserted by his daughters and their husbands, a dupe of our society and of the truest affection. Rastignac then and there resolved to exploit this world, to wear full dress of virtue, honesty, and fine manners. He was empanoplied in selfishness. When the young scion of nobility discovered that Nucingen wore the same armor, he respected him much as some knight mounted upon a barb and arrayed in damascened steel would have respected an adversary equally well horsed and equipped at a tournament in the Middle Ages. But for the time he had grown effeminate amid the delights of Capua. The friendship of such a woman as the Baronne de Nucingen is of a kind that sets a man abjuring egoism in all its forms.

"Delphine had been deceived once already; in her first venture of the affections she came across a piece of Birmingham manufacture, in the shape of the late lamented de Marsay; and therefore she could not but feel a limitless affection for a young provincial with all the provincial's articles of faith. Her tenderness reacted upon Rastignac. So by the time that Nucingen had put his wife's friend into the harness in which the exploiter always gets the exploited, he had reached the precise juncture when he (the baron) meditated a third suspension of payment. To Rastignac he confided his position;

he pointed out to Rastignac a means of making 'reparation.' As a consequence of his intimacy, he was expected to play the part of confederate. The baron judged it unsafe to communicate the whole of his plot to his conjugal collaborator. Rastignac quite believed in impending disaster; and the baron allowed him to believe further that he (Rastignac) saved the shop.

"But when there are so many threads in a skein, there are apt to be knots. Rastignac trembled for Delphine's money. He stipulated that Delphine must be independent and her estate separated from her husband's, swearing to himself that he would repay her by trebling her fortune. As, however, Rastignac said nothing of himself, Nucingen begged him to take, in the event of success, twenty-five shares of a thousand francs in the argentiferous lead-mines, and Eugène took them —not to offend him! Nucingen had put Rastignac up to this the day before that evening in the Rue Joubert when our friend counseled Malvina to marry. A cold shiver ran through Rastignac at the sight of so many happy folk in Paris going to and fro unconscious of the impending loss; even as a young commander might shiver at the first sight of an army drawn up before a battle. He saw the d'Aiglemonts, the d'Aldriggers, and Beaudenord. Poor little Isaure and Godefroid playing at love, what were they but Acis and Galatea under the rock which a hulking Polyphemus was about to send down upon them?"

"That monkey of a Bixiou has something almost like talent," said Blondet.

"Oh! so I am not maundering now?" asked Bixiou, enjoying his success as he looked round at his surprised auditors. "For two months past," he continued, "Godefroid had given himself up to all the little pleasures of preparation for the marriage. At such times men are like birds building nests in spring; they come and go, pick up their bits of straw, and fly off with them in their beaks to line the nest that is to hold a

brood of young birds by-and-by. Isaure's bridegroom had taken a house in the Rue de la Plancher at a thousand crowns, a comfortable little house, neither too large nor too small, which suited them. Every morning he went round to take a look at the workmen and to superintend the painters. He had introduced 'comfort' (the only good thing in England)—heating apparatus to maintain an even temperature all over the house; fresh, soft colors, carefully chosen furniture, neither too showy nor too much in the fashion; spring-blinds fitted to every window inside and out; plate and new carriages. He had seen to the stables, coach-house, and harness-room, where Toby, Joby, Paddy floundered and fidgeted about like a marmot let loose, apparently rejoiced to know that there would be women about the place and a 'lady!' This fervent passion of a man that sets up housekeeping, choosing clocks, going to visit his betrothed with his pockets full of patterns of stuffs, consulting her as to the bedroom furniture, going, coming, and trotting about, for love's sake—all this, I say, is a spectacle in the highest degree calculated to rejoice the hearts of honest people, especially tradespeople. And as nothing pleases folk better than the marriage of a good-looking young fellow of seven-and-twenty and a charming girl of nineteen that dances admirably well, Godefroid in his perplexity over the *corbeille* (wedding-basket) asked Mme. de Nucingen and Rastignac to breakfast with him and advise him on this all-important point. He hit likewise on the happy idea of asking his cousin d'Aiglemont and his wife to meet them, as well as Mme. de Sérizy. Women of the world are ready enough to join for once in an improvised breakfast-party at a bachelor's rooms."

"It is their way of playing truant," put in Blondet.

"Of course they went over the new house," resumed Bixiou. "Married women relish these little expeditions as ogres relish warm flesh; they feel young again with the young bliss, unspoiled as yet by fruition. Breakfast was

served in Godefroid's sitting-room, decked out like a troop-horse for a farewell to bachelor life. There were dainty little dishes such as women love to devour, nibble at, and sip of a morning, when they are usually alarmingly hungry and horribly afraid to confess to it. It would seem that a woman compromises herself by admitting that she is hungry. 'Why have you come alone?' inquired Godefroid when Rastignac appeared. 'Mme. de Nucingen is out of spirits; I will tell you all about it,' answered Rastignac, with the air of a man whose temper has been tried. 'A quarrel?' hazarded Godefroid. 'No.' At four o'clock the women took flight for the Bois de Boulogne; Rastignac stayed in the room and looked out of the window, fixing his melancholy gaze upon Toby, Joby, Paddy, who stood, his arms crossed in Napoleonic fashion, audaciously posted in front of Beaudenord's cab-horse. The child could only control the animal with his shrill little voice, but the horse was afraid of Joby, Toby.

"'Well,' began Godefroid, 'what is the matter with you, my dear fellow? You look gloomy and anxious; your gayety is forced. You are tormented by incomplete happiness. It is wretched, and that is a fact, when one cannot marry the woman one loves at the mayor's office and the church.'

"'Have you courage to hear what I have to say? I wonder whether you will see how much a man must be attached to a friend if he can be guilty of such a breach of confidence as this for his sake.'

"Something in Rastignac's voice stung like a lash of a whip.

"'*What?*' asked Godefroid de Beaudenord, turning pale.

"'I was unhappy over your joy; I had not the heart to keep such a secret to myself when I saw all these preparations, your happiness in bloom.'

"'Just say it out in three words!'

"'Swear to me on your honor that you will be as silent as the grave——'

"'As the grave,' repeated Beaudenord.

"'That if one of your nearest relatives were concerned in this secret, he should not know it.'

"'No.'

"'Very well. Nucingen started to-night for Brussels. He must file his schedule if he cannot arrange a settlement. This very morning Delphine petitioned for the separation of her estate. You may still save your fortune.'

"'How?' faltered Godefroid; the blood turned to ice in his veins.

"'Simply write to the Baron de Nucingen, antedating your letter a fortnight, and instruct him to invest all your capital in shares.' Rastignac suggested Claparon and Company, and continued—'You have a fortnight, a month, possibly three months, in which to realize and make something; the shares are still going up——'

"'But d'Aiglemont, who was here at breakfast with us, has a million in Nucingen's bank.'

"'Look here; I do not know whether there will be enough of these shares to cover it; and, beside, I am not his friend, I cannot betray Nucingen's confidence. You must not speak to d'Aiglemont. If you say a word, you must answer to me for the consequences.'

"Godefroid stood stockstill for ten minutes.

"'Do you accept? Yes or no?' said the inexorable Rastignac.

"Godefroid took up the pen, wrote at Rastignac's dictation, and signed his name.

"'My poor cousin!' he cried.

"'Each for himself,' said Rastignac. 'And there is one more settled!' he added to himself as he left Godefroid de Beaudenord.

"While Rastignac was manœuvring thus in Paris, imagine the state of things on the Bourse. A friend of mine, a provincial, a stupid creature, once asked me as we came past the

Bourse between four and five in the afternoon what all that crowd of chatterers was doing, what they could possibly find to say to each other, and why they were wandering to and fro when business in public securities was over for the day. 'My friend,' said I, 'they have made their meal, and now they are digesting it; while they digest it, they gossip about their neighbors, or there would be no commercial security in Paris. Concerns are floated here, such and such a man—Palma, for instance, who is something the same here as Sinard at the Académie Royale des Sciences—Palma says, "Let the speculation be made!" and the speculation is made.'"

"What a man that Hebrew is," put in Blondet; "he has not had a university education, but a universal education. And universal does not in his case mean superficial; whatever he knows, he knows to the bottom. He has a genius, an intuitive faculty for business. He is the oracle of all the lynxes that rule the Paris market; they will not touch an investment until Palma has looked into it. He looks solemn, he listens, ponders, and reflects; his interlocutor thinks that after this consideration he has come round his man, till Palma says, 'This will not do for me.' The most extraordinary thing about Palma, to my mind, is the fact that he and Werbrust were partners for ten years, and there was never the shadow of a disagreement between them."

"That is the way with the very strong or the very weak; any two between the extremes fall out and lose no time in making enemies of each other," said Couture.

"Nucingen, you see, had neatly and skillfully put a little bombshell under the colonnades of the Bourse, and toward four o'clock in the afternoon it exploded. 'Here is something serious; have you heard the news?' asked du Tillet, drawing Werbrust into a corner. 'Here is Nucingen gone off to Brussels, and his wife petitioning for the separation of her estate.'

"'Are you and he in it together for a liquidation?' asked Werbrust, smiling.

"'No foolery, Werbrust,' said du Tillet. 'You know the holders of his paper. Now, look here. There is business in it. Shares in this new concern of ours have gone up twenty per cent. already; they will go up to five-and-twenty by the end of the quarter; you know why. They are going to pay a splendid dividend.'

"'Sly dog,' said Werbrust. 'Get along with you; you are a devil with long and sharp claws, and you have them deep in the butter.'

"'Just let me speak or we shall not have time to operate. I hit on the idea as soon as I heard the news. I positively saw Mme. de Nucingen crying; she is afraid for her fortune.'

"'Poor little thing!' said the old Alsacian Jew, with an ironical expression. 'Well?' he added, as du Tillet was silent.

"'Well. At my place I have a thousand shares of a thousand francs in our concern; Nucingen handed them over to me to put on the market, do you understand? Good. Now let us buy up a million of Nucingen's paper at a discount of ten or twenty per cent., and we shall make a handsome percentage out of it. We shall be debtors and creditors both; confusion will be worked! But we must set about it carefully, or the holders may imagine that we are operating in Nucingen's interests.'

"Then Werbrust understood. He squeezed du Tillet's hand with an expression such as a woman's face wears when she is playing her neighbor a trick.

"Martin Falleix came up. 'Well, have you heard the news?' he asked. 'Nucingen has stopped payment.'

"'Pooh,' said Werbrust, 'pray don't noise it about; give those that hold his paper a chance.'

"'What is the cause of the smash; do you know?' put in Claparon.

"'You know nothing about it,' said du Tillet. 'There isn't any smash. Payment will be made in full. Nucingen will start again; I shall find him all the money he wants. I know the causes of the suspension. He put all his capital into Mexican securities, and they are sending him metal in return; old Spanish cannon cast in such an insane fashion that they melted down gold and bell-metal and church plate for it, and all the wreck of the Spanish dominion in the Indies. The specie is slow in coming, and the dear baron is hard up. That is all.'

"'It is a fact,' said Werbrust; 'I am taking his paper myself at twenty per cent. discount.'

"The news spread swift as fire in a straw-rick. The most contradictory reports got about. But such confidence was felt in the firm after the two previous suspensions, that every one stuck to Nucingen's paper. 'Palma must lend us a hand,' said Werbrust.

"Now Palma was the Kellers' oracle, and the Kellers were brimful of Nucingen's paper. A hint from Palma would be enough. Werbrust arranged with Palma, and he rang the alarm bell. There was a panic next day on the Bourse. The Kellers, acting on Palma's advice, let go Nucingen's paper at ten per cent. of loss; they set the example on 'Change, for they were supposed to know very well what they were about. Taillefer followed up with three hundred thousand francs at a discount of twenty per cent., and Martin Falleix with two hundred thousand at fifteen. Gigonnet saw what was going on. He helped to spread the panic, with a view to buying up Nucingen's paper himself and making a commission of two or three per cent. out of Werbrust.

"In a corner of the Bourse he came upon poor Matifat, who had three hundred thousand francs in Nucingen's bank. Matifat, ghastly and haggard, beheld the terrible Gigonnet, the bill-discounter of his old quarter, coming up to worry him. He shuddered in spite of himself.

"'Things are looking bad. There is a crisis on hand. Nucingen is compounding with his creditors. But this does not interest you, Daddy Matifat; you are out of business.'

"'Oh, well, you are mistaken, Gigonnet;* I am in for three hundred thousand francs. I meant to speculate in Spanish bonds.'

"'Then you have saved your money. Spanish bonds would have swept everything away; whereas I am prepared to offer you something like fifty per cent. for your account with Nucingen.'

"'I would rather wait for the composition,' said Matifat; 'I never knew a banker yet that paid less than fifty per cent. Ah, if it were only a matter of ten per cent. of loss——' added the retired man of drugs.

"'Well, will you take fifteen?' asked Gigonnet.

"'You are very keen about it, it seems to me,' said Matifat.

"'Good-night.'

"'Will you take twelve?'

"'Done,' said Gigonnet.

"Before night two millions had been bought up in the names of the three chance-united confederates, and posted by du Tillet to the debit side of Nucingen's account. Next day they drew their premium.

"The dainty little old Baroness d'Aldrigger was at breakfast with her two daughters and Godefroid, when Rastignac came in with a diplomatic air to steer the conversation on the financial crisis. The Baron de Nucingen felt a lively regard for the d'Aldrigger family; he was prepared, if things went amiss, to cover the baroness' account with his best securities, to wit, some shares in the argentiferous lead-mines, but the application must come from the lady.

"'Poor Nucingen!' said the baroness. 'What can have become of him?'

"'He is in Belgium. His wife is petitioning for a separa-

* See "César Birotteau."

tion of her property; but he has gone to see if he can arrange with some bankers to see him through.'

"'Dear me! That reminds me of my poor husband! Dear Monsieur de Rastignac, how you must feel this, so attached as you are to the house!'

"'If all the indifferent are covered, his personal friends will be rewarded later on. He will pull through; he is a clever man.'

"'An honest man, above all things,' said the baroness.

"A month later, Nucingen met all his liabilities, with no formalities beyond the letters by which creditors signified the investments which they preferred to take in exchange for their capital; and with no action on the part of other banks beyond registering the transfer of Nucingen's paper for the investments in favor.

"While du Tillet, Werbrust, Claparon, Gigonnet, and others that thought themselves clever were fetching in Nucingen's paper from abroad with a premium of one per cent.—for it was still worth their while to exchange it for securities in a rising market—there was all the more talk on the Bourse, because there was nothing now to fear. They babbled over Nucingen; he was discussed and judged; they even slandered him. His luxurious life, his enterprises! When a man has so much on his hands, he overreaches himself, and so forth, and so forth.

"The talk was at its height, when several people were greatly astonished to receive letters from Geneva, Basel, Milan, Naples, Genoa, Marseilles, and London, in which their correspondents, previously advised of the failure, informed them that somebody was offering one per cent. for Nucingen's paper! 'There is something up,' said the lynxes of the Bourse.

"The Court meanwhile had granted the application for Mme. de Nucingen's separation as to her estate, and the question became still more complicated. The newspapers

announced the return of M. le Baron de Nucingen from a journey to Belgium; he had been arranging, it was said, with a well-known Belgian firm to resume the working of some coal-pits in the Bois de Bossut. The baron himself appeared on the Bourse, and never even took the trouble to contradict the slanders circulating against him. He scorned to reply through the press; he simply bought a splendid estate just outside Paris for two millions of francs. Six weeks afterward, the Bordeaux shipping intelligence announced that two vessels with cargoes of bullion to the amount of seven millions, consigned to the firm of Nucingen, were lying in the river.

"Then it was plain to Palma, Werbrust, and du Tillet that the trick had been played. Nobody else was any the wiser. The three scholars studied the means by which the great bubble had been created, saw that it had been preparing for eleven months, and pronounced Nucingen the greatest financier in Europe.

"Rastignac understood nothing of all this, but he had the four hundred thousand francs which Nucingen had allowed him to shear from the Parisian sheep, and he portioned his sisters. D'Aiglemont, at a hint from his cousin Beaudenord, besought Rastignac to accept ten per cent. upon his million if he would undertake to convert it into shares in a canal which is still to make, for Nucingen worked things with the Government to such purpose that the concessionaries find it to their interest not to finish their scheme. Charles Grandet implored Delphine's lover to use his interest to secure shares for him in exchange for his cash. And altogether Rastignac played the part of Law for ten days; he had the prettiest duchesses in France praying him to allot shares to them, and to-day the young man very likely has an income of forty thousand livres, derived in the first instance from the argentiferous lead-mines."

"If every one was better off, who can have lost?" asked Finot.

"Hear the conclusion," rejoined Bixiou. "The Marquis d'Aiglemont and Beaudenord (I put them forward as two examples out of many) kept their allotted shares, enticed by the so-called dividend that fell due a few months afterward. They had another three per cent. on their capital, they sang Nucingen's praises, and took his part at a time when everybody suspected that he was going to bankrupt. Godefroid married his beloved Isaure and took shares in the mines to the value of a hundred thousand francs. The Nucingens gave a ball even more splendid than people expected of them on the occasion of the wedding; Delphine's present to the bride was a charming set of rubies. Isaure danced, a happy wife, a girl no longer. The little baroness was more than ever a Shepherdess of the Alps. The ball was at its height when Malvina, the Andalouse of Musset's poem, heard du Tillet's voice drily advising her to take Desroches. Desroches, warmed to the right degree by Rastignac and Nucingen, tried to come to an understanding financially; but at the first hint of shares in the mines for the bride's portion, he broke off and went back to the Matifats in the Rue du Cherche-Midi, only to find the accursed canal shares which Gigonnet had foisted on Matifat in lieu of cash.

"They had not long to wait for the crash. The firm of Claparon did business on too large a scale, the capital was locked up, the concern ceased to serve its purposes, or to pay dividends, though the speculations were sound. These misfortunes coincided with the events of 1827. In 1829 it was too well known that Claparon was a man of straw set up by the two giants; he fell from his pedestal. Shares that had fetched twelve hundred and fifty francs fell to four hundred, though intrinsically they were worth six. Nucingen, knowing their value, bought them up at four.

"Meanwhile the little Baroness d'Aldrigger had sold out of the mines that paid no dividends, and Godefroid had reinvested the money belonging to his wife and her mother in

Claparon's concern. Debts compelled them to realize when the shares were at their lowest, so that of seven hundred thousand francs only two hundred thousand remained. They made a clearance, and all that was left was prudently invested in the three per cents. at seventy-five. Godefroid, the sometime gay and careless bachelor who had lived without taking thought all his life long, found himself saddled with a little goose of a wife totally unfitted to bear adversity (indeed, before six months were over he had witnessed the anserine transformation of his beloved), to say nothing of a mother-in-law whose mind ran on pretty dresses while she had not bread to eat. The two families must live together to live at all. It was only by stirring up all his considerably chilled interest that Godefroid got a post in the audit department. His friends? They were out of town. His relatives? All astonishment and promises. 'What! my dear boy! Oh! count upon me! Poor fellow!' and Beaudenord was clean forgotten fifteen minutes afterward. He owed his place to Nucingen and de Vandenesse.

"And to-day these so estimable and unfortunate people are living on a fourth floor (not counting the entresol) in the Rue du Mont Thabor. Malvina, the Adolphus' pearl of a granddaughter, has not a farthing. She gives music-lessons, not to be a burden upon her brother-in-law. You may see a tall, dark, thin, withered woman, like a mummy escaped from Passalacqua's, about afoot through the streets of Paris. In 1830 Beaudenord lost his situation just as his wife presented him with a fourth child. A family of eight and two servants (Wirth and his wife) and an income of eight thousand livres. And at this moment the mines are paying so well that an original share of a thousand francs brings in a dividend of cent. per cent.

"Rastignac and Mme. de Nucingen bought the shares sold by the baroness and Godefroid. The Revolution made a peer of France of Nucingen and a grand officer of the Legion of Honor. He has not stopped payment since 1830, but still

I hear that he has something like seventeen millions. He put faith in the Ordinances of July, sold out of all his investments, and boldly put his money into the Funds when the three per cents. stood at forty-five. He persuaded the Tuileries that this was done out of devotion, and about the same time he and du Tillet between them swallowed down three millions belonging to that great scamp Philippe Bridau.

"Quite lately our baron was walking along the Rue de Rivoli on his way to the Bois when he met the Baroness d'Aldrigger under the colonnade. The little old lady wore a tiny green bonnet with a rose-colored lining, a flowered gown, and a mantilla; altogether, she was more than ever the Shepherdess of the Alps. She could no more be made to understand the causes of her poverty than the sources of her wealth. As she went along, leaning upon poor Malvina, that model of heroic devotion, she seemed to be the young girl and Malvina the old mother. Wirth followed them, carrying an umbrella.

"'Dere are beoples whose vordune I vound it imbossible to make,' said the baron, addressing his companion (M. Cointet, a cabinet minister). 'Now dot de baroxysm off brincibles haf bassed off, chust reinshtate dot boor Peautenord.'

"So Beaudenord went back to his desk, thanks to Nucingen's good offices; and the d'Aldriggers extol Nucingen as a hero of friendship, for he always sends the little Shepherdess of the Alps and her daughters invitations to his balls. No creature whatsoever can be made to understand that the baron yonder three times did his best to plunder the public without breaking the letter of the law, and enriched people in spite of himself. No one has a word to say against him. If anybody should suggest that a big capitalist often is another word for a cut-throat, it would be a most egregious calumny. If stocks rise and fall, if property improves and depreciates, the fluctuations of the market are caused by a common movement, a

something in the air, a tide in the affairs of men subject like other tides to lunar influences. The great Arago is much to blame for giving us no scientific theory to account for this important phenomenon. The only outcome of all this is an axiom which I have never seen anywhere in print——"

"And that is?"

"The debtor is more than a match for the creditor."

"Oh!" said Blondet. "For my own part, all that we have been saying seems to me to be a paraphrase of the epigram in which Montesquieu summed up *l'Esprit des Lois*" (The soul of the laws).

"What?" said Finot.

"Laws are like spiders' webs; the big flies get through, while the little ones are caught."

"Then, what are you for?" asked Finot.

"For absolute government, the only kind of government under which enterprises against the spirit of the law can be put down. Yes. Arbitrary rule is the salvation of a country when it comes to the support of justice, for the right of mercy is strictly one-sided. The king can pardon a fraudulent bankrupt; he cannot do anything for the victims. The letter of the law is fatal to modern society."

"Just get that into the electors' heads!" said Bixiou.

"Some one has undertaken to do it."

"Who?"

"Time. As the Bishop of Leon said, 'Liberty is ancient, but kingship is eternal;' any nation in its right mind returns to monarchical government in one form or another."

"I say, there was somebody next door," remarked Finot, hearing us rise to go.

"There always is somebody next door," retorted Bixiou. But he must have been drunk.

PARIS, *November*, 1837.

AN EPISODE OF THE REIGN OF TERROR

(*Un Episode sous la Terreur*).

Translated by Jno. Rudd, B. A.

About eight o'clock in the evening of January 22, 1793, an old gentlewoman walked down the steep declivity of the Saint-Martin suburb, ending at the church of Saint-Laurent, Paris. Footfalls could scarcely be heard, for the snow had fallen heavily during the day. The streets were deserted. The fear, natural to a profound silence, was further strengthened by the terror to which the whole of France was then stricken. The old gentlewoman had not met any one. Her dim and failing sight prevented her from seeing afar off a few pedestrians, thinly scattered as shadows, along the broad way of the faubourg.

Bravely she walked through the solitude as though her age might prove a talisman against all dangers; but, after leaving the Rue des Morts, she thought she heard the heavy and firm tread of a man behind her. She felt that unconsciously she had been listening to this tramp for some length of time. She attempted to walk faster, terrified at the thought of being followed; the bright light of a store-window seemed to offer a solution of the doubt that troubled her. In the shadow beyond the horizontal rays of light cast across the pavement, she abruptly turned around and plainly perceived a human figure dimly looming through the mist. That one imperfect glimpse was enough. For an instant she staggered under a stress of terror; no longer was there room for doubt that this man unknown had, step by step, tracked her from her house. The hope of escape from this spy gave strength to her weakened

limbs. She ran for a few minutes, reached a confectionery store, entered it and fell, rather than sat, upon a chair standing in front of the counter. A young woman, who was working embroidery, looked up on hearing the creaking latch of the door, and, recognizing through the glass-door an antiquated mantle of purple silk which the old lady wore, hurried to open a drawer as if intending to take from thence something that she had to give her. Both the action and appearance of the young woman implied a wish to speedily relieve herself of the company of her strange and unwelcome visitor. She found the drawer empty and gave utterance to an exclamation of anger. Without appearing to notice the old lady she came quickly from behind the counter and, going to the rear room, called her husband, who immediately responded.

"Where have you put——?" she asked him, in a mysterious whisper, not finishing the sentence, but calling to his notice the antiquated person, with a meaning glance.

The confectioner could see nothing but the great hood of black silk encircled with ribbons of purple which the stranger wore; he retired, with a motion to his wife which plainly meant, "Can you imagine I should leave *that* on the counter?"

The visitor remained silent and immobile, and the wife, astonished at this, was moved with compassion and curiosity as she viewed her. It was plainly to be seen that some recent terror had spread an extra paleness over the complexion of a face naturally livid, and like that of one given up to secret austerities. The covering of her head was arranged to conceal the hair, whitened doubtless by age, for the cleanliness of the collar she wore precluded the idea of her wearing powder. Her countenance was grave and noble, but this concealment of its natural adornment gave an air of monastical severity. The young storekeeper was sure that the stranger was one of the proscribed nobles and that she most probably had belonged to the Court.

"Madame?" she said with formal respect, forgetful of the proscribed title.

The old lady answered not. Some alarming object might have been painted upon the window of the store, her eyes were so fixed upon it.

"What is the matter, citizeness?" the master of the place inquired as he reëntered. He then drew the attention of his visitor to a small, blue cardboard box and held it out to her.

"It is nothing, my friends, nothing," she made answer in gentlest tones, raising her eyes to give the proprietor a grateful look. Thus seeing a phrygian* cap upon his head, she gave utterance to a low cry: "Ah! you it is that has betrayed me!"

A shrug, the deprecating gesture of horror, was the reply made by both the young woman and her husband. The unknown lady reddened as she felt a relief of feeling for her unjust suspicion.

"Excuse me," she said with childish affability. After taking a gold louis from her pocket she tendered it to the confectioner, saying, "Here is the sum agreed upon."

Poor folk can readily divine a disguised poverty. The storekeeper and his wife gave each a glance at the other which expressed the same thought. The coin was doubtless her last one. Her eyes sadly rested upon it and her hands tremblingly offered it. Yet no avarice showed in this dumb entreaty. The full extent of her sacrifice was manifestly apparent to her. Her features showed the undoubted tracings of hunger and want. They were legible as those of asceticism and timidity. Her attire showed vestiges of luxury. It was silk, well-worn; the mantle, though faded, was clean; the laces carefully darned; it was, in all, the remnants of opulence. The pair of storekeepers were divided between pity and self-interest; they soothed their tradesmen consciences with phrases:

"Citizeness, you appear but feeble——"

* The distinguishing sign of the Jacquerie.

"Perhaps madame would take something?" said the wife, cutting off her husband.

"We have good soup," he added.

"It is very cold; it may be that madame is made chill with her walk; you may rest here and warm yourself."

"He is not so black as he is painted, this devil," cried the husband.

These kind words won the heart of the old lady. She told them that a man had followed her and she was afraid of returning alone.

"And is that all?" said the man with the phrygian cap. "Wait for me, citizeness."

He gave the louis to his wife. His storekeeping soul was moved by a resemblance to gratitude which ever slips into such petty minds when an exorbitant price has been received for an article of little value. He donned the uniform of the National Guard, took up his cap, slung on his sword, and appeared under arms. Meantime the wife had been reflecting. As often occurs in many hearts, reflection will close the open hand of benevolence. She was afraid lest her husband should become mixed up in some dangerous affair; ill at ease and anxious, she pulled the tail of his coat, intending to stop his going. The worthy man, however, obeyed the dictates of Charity and offered himself as the lady's escort.

"Is it that the man who has affrighted her is now prowling outside?" asked the wife tremblingly.

"I am afraid so," said the old lady, very simply.

"Suppose that he is a spy. It may be a conspiracy. Don't go. Take back the box." The sudden compassion that had warmed him was chilled by these words whispered in his ear by the wife of his bosom.

"Well, there, I will say two words to the fellow and get rid of him," he said. He opened the door and hurried out.

Passive as a child and nearly paralyzed with fear the old gentlewoman again sat down. The confectioner very shortly

returned; his face, red by nature and further scorched by the fires of his bakery, had suddenly turned pale, and he was in such extreme terror that his legs trembled and his eyes were drunken with fear.

"Wretched aristocrat!" he shrieked, in fury, "is it that you would cut off our heads? Go away from here, move your heels, let me see them, don't you dare to come back; you must not suppose that I will supply you with the means for conspiracy."

Thus saying the confectioner made an effort to regain possession of the little box which was ensconced in one of the old lady's pockets. The bold hands of the storekeeper had barely touched her clothes but that she sprang to the open door, preferring to meet danger without protection, other than God's, than to restore what she had purchased. She assumed the agility of youth, disappeared through the doorway, and left the husband and wife crushed with trembling and amazement.

When she found herself alone on the street she walked rapidly; but soon her strength deserted her as she once more heard the creaking of the snow under the heavy footsteps of the spy. Perforce she stopped short; the man did likewise. Fain would she have spoken to him, but she dared not; either by reason of her terror or a lack of wonted intelligence she could not even look at him. Somewhat recovering she slowly resumed her walk. Step by step did the man measure hers, he kept the same distance behind her, moving as her shadow. As the silent couple repassed the church of Saint-Laurent the clock struck nine.

It is the nature of even the weakest souls to fall back into tranquillity after a time of violent agitation; for our bodily powers are limited though our feelings may be manifold. So the old gentlewoman, not receiving any injury from her apparent annoyer, began to imagine him a secret friend watching over and protecting her. She weighed in her mind the de-

tails of numerous other appearances of the mysterious attendant and tried to find some plausible pretext for this so consoling thought. She took pleasure in giving credit to him for good, rather than discredit for sinister, motives. She walked on with a firmer tread, and forgot the terror he had evidently excited in the confectioner, toward the higher portion of the Faubourg Saint-Martin.

In about half an hour's time she came to a house near the junction of the main street of the suburb with that one running out to the Pantin barrier. To-day this is one of the loneliest streets in all Paris. The north wind blew from the Buttes Chaumont and whistled among the houses, or properly cottages, sparsely scattered through the thinly inhabited little valley where the fences are built of mud and refuse bones. This woe-begone district is the natural home of poverty and grim despair. The man, intent on following the poor creature—courageously threading these gloomy and silent streets —appeared struck with the spectacle. He paused reflectingly, standing in a hesitating manner, being hardly visible by the light of a street lantern which flickeringly pierced the fog. Terror gave sight to the gentlewoman and she fancied that she saw a something sinister on the face of this unknown man. Her terrors again revived, but profiting by his curious hesitation she swept like a shadow to the portal of the isolated dwelling, touched a spring and disappeared with phantasmagoric alertness. The man stood motionless, gazing at the house, which was, as it were, a type of the miserable buildings of the district.

The hovel, tottering to its fall, was built of rough blocks of porous stone, its coating of yellow stucco was seamed with cracks, and only seemed to be awaiting a rough wind for its utter demolition. The brown tiled roof, covered with moss, had sunk in numerous spots, giving the impression that the weight of the accumulated snow might crush it down at any moment. There were three windows in each story; their

frames rotten with dampness and shrunken with the heat of the sun, it was plain that the outer cold must penetrate to the interior. This lonely dwelling stood like an ancient tower that Time had forgotten to raze. Irregularly cut in the roof were the garret windows whence gleamed a faint light; the rest of the house was in dense obscurity. The old lady with difficulty climbed the clumsy stairway, keeping a fast hold of the rope baluster. She lightly knocked on the door of an apartment in the roof, entered and hastily seated herself on a chair offered her by an old man.

"Hide! hide yourself!" she cried. "It is but seldom we go out, yet are our errands known, our steps watched——"

"What has occurred?" asked another old woman, sitting near the small fire.

"The man who has been hanging about the house since yesterday followed me to-night."

The occupants of the place looked at each other in terror. The old man was the least concerned of the trio; he was in the greatest danger. When misfortune and the yoke of persecution oppress, a courageous man begins, as it were, to prepare for the sacrifice of himself; he looks upon each day as a victory won from Fate. The anxiety which shone in the eyes of the two women, fixed as they were upon the old man, proved conclusively that he and he alone was the object of their fear.

"Shall we distrust God, my sisters?" he said in a hollow, impressive voice. "Did we not chant praises to Him amidst the cries of assassins and victims in the convent? Surely if it so pleased Him to save me from that slaughter, it must have been for some destiny which, without a murmur, I shall accept. The good God ever affords protection to His own, He disposes of them according to His ever-gracious will. It is of yourselves that we should think—not of me."

"No," said the first woman; "what comparison can there be between our lives and that of a priest?"

"I have considered myself as dead," said the nun seated near the fire, "since the day that I found myself outside the Abbaye des Chelles."

"Here," said the one who had lately entered, holding out the little blue box to the priest, "here are the holy wafers—— Hark!" she cried, interrupting herself. "I hear some one on the stairs."

All three listened intently. The noise ceased.

"Do not be alarmed," said the abbé, "even should any one request an entrance. A faithful and reliable person has arranged matters to cross the frontier; he will shortly call here for letters I have already written to the Duc de Langeais and the Marquis de Beauséant, telling them what measures they must adopt to get you out of this dreadful country, thus to save you from the death or misery that you must, otherwise, here undergo."

"Can you not follow us?" said the two nuns, in soft, despairing tones.

"My place is near the victims," said the priest, simply.

The nuns sat silent, gazing at him with rapt admiration.

"Sister Martha," he said, speaking to the nun who had fetched the wafers, "the messenger must answer '*Fiat voluntas*' to the word 'Hosanna.'"

"There is some one on the stairway," cried the other sister, at the same time quickly uncovering a hiding-place bored near the edge of the roof.

This time the steps of a man, sounding in the deep silence of the rough stairs, were plainly to be heard as he encountered the gnarled boards and the cakes of hardened mud. The priest, with much difficulty, slid into the narrow niche and the nuns hastily covered him with clothes.

"You may shut me in, Sister Agatha," he said, in a smothered voice.

Hardly was he in hiding when three knocks upon the door-jamb made the nuns tremble with apprehension. They con-

sulted each other with their eyes, for speak they dared not. They were like the plants of a conservatory, after their forty years of separation from the world, which wilt when exposed to the outer air. They knew none other than the life of the convent, that only were they accustomed to, no other could they conceive of, their ideas, as their life, were bounded by its walls; and when, one morning, their bars and gratings were razed to the ground they shuddered to find themselves free. One may imagine the kind of imbecility which the events of the Revolution, enacted under their eyes, must have produced in these simple souls. They were quite incapable of harmonizing the ideas of the convent with the exigencies of ordinary life; they comprehended not their own situation; like children who had ever had parental care, now severed from their maternal guardianship, they had ceased not to pray as other children cease not to cry. Thus in the presence of imminent danger they remained dumb, passive, and had no other defense than the resignation of the Christian.

The intending intruder was left to interpret their silence as he might, but presently he opened the door and gave view of himself. The consternation of the two nuns was great, and they trembled as they recognized the person who had watched the house for some days past and had seemed to make inquiries about its inmates. They stood stockstill, looking him over with a disturbed curiosity, like as would the children of savages examining a being from another clime. The stranger was very tall and stout, yet there was nothing indicating that he was a bad man. The immobility of the sisters was reproduced in himself, he remained without motion, his eyes roving slowly around the room. On planks were two bundles of straw which served as the nuns' beds. In the centre of the room was a table, upon it a copper candlestick, a few dishes, three knives, and a round loaf of bread. The fire in the grate was low, and the few sticks of wood piled in a corner of the room gave unmistakable evidence of the poverty of the

occupants. The walls, once painted, now much defaced, showed the wretched state of the roof through which the rain had trickled, leaving a network of brown stains. A sacred relic, rescued, no doubt, from the looting of the Abbaye des Chelles, adorned the mantel. Three chairs, two chests, and a broken set of drawers comprised the whole of the furniture. A doorway near the fireplace showed the probability of an inner apartment.

The man had soon mentally possessed himself of the inventory of this poor cell. Across his face came an expression of pity, he threw a glance beaming with kindliness upon the two startled women and appeared as much embarrassed as themselves. The strange silence in which all three stood and faced each other, apparently long, really lasted but a moment, the stranger seeming to realize the weakness and inexperience of the poor helpless creatures. In a voice which he strove to render gentle, he said—

"I have not come as an enemy, citizenesses." He paused, then resuming: "My sisters, should harm happen to you, be sure that I shall not have been the cause. I have come to beg a favor of you."

Still they remained silent.

"If I ask too much—if I annoy you—I will at once depart; believe me, though, that I am heartily devoted to you; should there be any service I can render you, command me without scruple. I, and I alone, perhaps, am above the law, since the King no longer exists."

These words given with the true ring of honesty induced Sister Agatha, a nun belonging to the ducal house of Langeais, whose manner showed that she had at one time lived amid the festivities of life and inhaled the breath of Court, to gravely point to a chair as who should say: "Be seated." The unknown showed his pleasure by an exclamation, partly of melancholy, as he interpreted the gesture. He respectfully awaited the seating of the sisters and then obeyed it.

"You have given shelter," he said, "to a venerable abbé who has not sworn allegiance to the Republic, who most miraculously escaped the massacre at the Carmelite convent."

"*Hosanna,*" said Sister Agatha, suddenly interrupting the stranger, and looking at him anxiously and curiously.

"That is not his name, I believe," he made reply.

"But, monsieur, there is no priest here," said Sister Martha, quickly, "and——"

"Then you should be more careful," said the visitor mildly, reaching to the table and taking up a breviary. "I can scarcely think you understand Latin and——"

The extreme distress depicted on the features of the poor nuns warned him that he had gone too far; their agitation was excessive, their eyes filled with tears.

"Be not afraid," he said; "I know both the names of your guest and yourselves. During the past three days I have learned of your indigence and your brave devotion to the venerable Abbé de——"

"Hush!" said Sister Agatha, ingenuously placing a finger on her lips.

"You see, my sisters, that had I had the horrible design of betraying you, that I might easily have done so time and again."

As he uttered these words the priest crawled from his prison and appeared in the centre of the room.

"I cannot think, monsieur," he said courteously, "that you can be one of my persecutors. I trust you. What do you desire of me?"

The saint-like confidence of the aged man and the nobility of soul which showed on his countenance might well have disarmed an assassin. The mysterious being who had agitated this penurious home, this place of divine resignation, stood in contemplation of the group before him; then he addressed the abbé in a trusting voice, with these words:

"My father, I came to ask you to celebrate a mass for the

repose of the soul—of—of a sacred being whose body can never be laid in holy ground."

The abbé made an involuntary shudder. The nuns did not know of whom it was that the strange man had spoken; they stood with their necks stretched, their faces turned toward the speakers, plainly showing eager curiosity. The ecclesiastic looked searchingly at the stranger; undoubted anxiety was discernible on every feature, and his eyes offered an earnest, ardent prayer.

"Yes," said the priest at length. "At midnight return here and I shall then be ready to celebrate the only requiem mass that we are able to offer as expiation of the crime of which you speak."

A shiver agitated the unknown; then a sweet and solemn joy appeared to rise above some great and secret grief. He respectfully saluted the abbé and the two saintly women, and departed with a mute gratitude of which these charitable souls knew so well the interpretation.

After two hours the stranger returned, knocked cautiously at the garret-door, and was admitted by Mlle. de Langeais, who led him to the inner room of the lowly refuge, where all was in readiness for the ceremony. The old set of drawers had been placed by the nuns between the two chimney-flues, its scarred edges being hid beneath a magnificent altar-cloth of green moiré. A large ebony and ivory crucifix hung on the discolored wall and stood out in bright relief from the adjacent bareness, and immediately caught the eye. Four small, slender tapers, which the sisters had managed to attach to the altar with sealing-wax, cast a dim glimmer hardly reflected by the dingy wall. These feeble rays barely lit up the rest of the chamber, but as their light illumined the sacred objects it looked like an aureola from heaven to enlighten the naked, undecorated altar.

The floor was damp. The attic-roof sloped sharply on each

side of the room and was filled with crevices admitting the boisterous wind. Far from stately, there was never aught more solemn than this dismal service. A long distant cry might easily have pierced the solemn silence—silence so profound that it gave majestic awe to this nocturnal scene. The poverty of the surroundings and the grandeur of the ceremony made a strong contrast, arousing the holy terrors of religion. The aged nuns knelt on either side of the altar on the earthen-tiled floor with ne'er a thought of its horrid dampness; they, with the priest robed in his pontifical vestments, prayed aloud; the latter placed a golden chalice, incrusted with gems, upon the altar—no doubt a sacred vessel saved from the pillage of the Abbaye des Chelles. Near this cup, which had been a royal gift, was arranged the wafers and wine of the eucharist, contained in two drinking glasses hardly fit to grace the dingy tables of some mean tavern. The needed missal had been replaced with the priest's breviary, and lay on a corner of the impromptu altar. An earthen dish served as the ablution cup for the washing of those hands innocent and spotless of blood. It was at once majestic and paltry, poor yet noble, holy and profane in one.

Between the sisters the unknown knelt with pious mien. Then his eyes caught sight of the crepe draping the chalice and crucifix—for bereft of other means of making known the object of this requiem mass the abbé had put God Himself in mourning—the mysterious visitor was seized with an all-powerful recollection and great beads of perspiration gathered on his forehead. The four actors in this awful drama gazed upon each other in sympathy, their souls acted each upon the other and communicated the feelings of all in a mysterious blending of holy pity. Their one thought, it seemed, might have evoked from the dead that sacred martyr whose mortal remains had been devoured by quick-lime, but whose ghost rose before them in full majestic royalty.

They were performing a requiem mass without the presence

of the dead. Four pious souls knelt in intercession to God for a King of France, they were making his funeral ceremony minus a coffin, in a chamber showing disjointed laths and unplastered beams. No thought of self sullied this purest of all devotions, this act of marvelous loyalty. Maybe to God it was the cup of cold water that weighed in the balance as a myriad of virtues. Monarchy was present in the prayers of the priest and the two poor women; it might be that Revolution was also there in the person of the mysterious visitor whose countenance showed the remorse that caused him to offer this solemn repentance.

In place of pronouncing the Latin words, "introibo ad altare Dei," the abbé, with an intuition almost divine, looked down upon his congregation of three, who represented Christian France, and said, in words effectually effacing the meanness and squalor of the den: "We enter now into the sanctuary of God."

Solemn awe seized the hearers at these words, uttered with incisive unction. The great dome of St. Peter's in Rome never canopied God in more awful majesty to humanity than He now was, beneath this trembling roof, in the eyes of these Christians; making patent the truth that no mediation is needed between God and man. His glory descends from Himself alone. The warm piety of the unknown was evidently sincere—the feeling that held the monarch and these four servants of God was one. The sacred words resounded as celestial music in the silence. At one moment the unknown one broke down and wept; this was in the *Pater noster*, to which the abbé added a clause in Latin and which, it was apparent, the visitor understood and applied: *Et remitte scelus regicidis sicut Ludovicus eis remisit semetipse*, or, "And forgive the regicides as Louis XVI. himself forgave them." The sisters saw the tears coursing down the virile cheeks of their visitor, and splashing fast on the tiled floor.

The Office of the Dead was intoned. The *Domine salvum*

*fac regem,** chanted in low tones, moved the hearts of these faithful monarchists as their thoughts turned to the infant King, for whom the prayer was offered, and who was now captive in the hands of his enemies. Perhaps fearing a further crime impending, in which he must needs perform an unwilling part, the unknown visitor shuddered. The service over, the curé motioned to the two nuns and they retired to the outer chamber. When he was alone with the unknown, the old man approached him with a gentle sadness and said, in the tone of a father:

"My son, if your hands have been steeped in the blood of that holy martyr, the King, confess now yourself to me. There is no crime in the eyes of God which may not be washed away by a repentance as deep and sincere as yours seems to be."

An involuntary movement of terror escaped the stranger at these words; but he speedily resumed his stolid manner, and, looking on the priest with calm assurance, he said:

"My father," in a voice that nevertheless trembled, "no one can be more innocent than myself of the blood shed——"

"I verily believe it," said the priest.

He paused and further examined the penitent; then, his belief becoming certainty that he was one of those timorous members of the Assembly who sacrificed the sacred and inviolate head to save their own, he proceeded in a grave voice:

"Remember, my son, that much more than not having taken part in that great sin is necessary to absolve from guilt. Those who retained their sabres in their sheaths, when they should have drawn to defend their King, must render a heavy account to the King of kings. Yes," said the venerable abbé, moving his head expressively, "yes, heavy indeed! by idly standing by they became the accomplices in a terrible transgression."

"Is it your belief," said the stranger in a tone of amaze-

* Lord save the King.

ment, "that an indirect participation will be punished? The soldier under orders to form the line—was he guilty?"

The abbé hesitated.

He, the stranger, was glad of the dilemma that placed this royalist between the two canons of passive obedience and the consecrated person of the King—the former in the minds of monarchists should dominate the military system—and he readily accepted the hesitancy on the part of the priest as solving the doubts that troubled him. Then, so as to allow no time for the old Jansenist to further reflect, he said quickly:

"It would cause me to blush were I to offer you any fee whatever for the requiem mass you have just celebrated for the rest of the soul of the King and for the ease of my conscience. Inestimable things can only be purchased by offerings without price. Be pleased to accept, monsieur, the gift of a holy relic, it is yours; the time may be when you will realize its value."

Speaking these words he gave the ecclesiastic a small box of light weight. The priest involuntarily held out his hand and took it, for the solemn tone of the words and the manifest awe depicted on the stranger's face as he held the box filled him with fresh amazement. The two nuns were awaiting them as they entered the outer room together.

"You are residing," said the stranger, "in a house owned by Mucius Scævola, a plasterer living on the first floor, who is noted in this arrondissement for his patriotism. All the same, he is secretly devoted to the Bourbons. Formerly he was Monseigneur le Prince de Conti's huntsman, he owes everything to him. In this dwelling, so long as you may stay, you are in greater safety than you could be in any other part of France. Pray remain. Pious souls will supply your needs and will watch over and protect you; remain here awaiting without fear the coming of brighter days. A year hence, on that same twenty-first of January"* (he shuddered as he uttered

* Louis XVI. was guillotined on this date.

these words), "I shall come again to once more celebrate the mass of expiation——"

He could not end the sentence. He bowed to his silent auditors and, casting a last, lingering look upon the tokens of their poverty, he disappeared.

This event, to the two simple-minded women, had all the interest of romance. When the venerable abbé spoke to them of his mysterious gift, and in what a solemn manner it had been tendered by the stranger, it was placed upon the table and three anxious faces, dimly illumined by a tallow-candle, betrayed uncontrollable curiosity. Mademoiselle de Langeais opened the little box, she took from it an exquisite handkerchief of marvelous fineness, stained with perspiration. When she unfolded it they saw dark stains.

"That is blood!" said the abbé.

"It is marked with the royal crown!" cried the other nun.

The sisters let it fall, this precious relic, with gestures of horror. The mystery that enfolded their unknown visitant was inexplicable to these ingenuous minds, and the abbé, from that day on, forbade himself to attempt the solving of the enigma.

The three recluses soon noticed that, in despite of the Terror, a powerful arm was outstretched above them. They first received firewood and victuals; then the sisters readily surmised that some woman must be associated with their protector, for linen and clothes came mysteriously to them; this gave them opportunity of going out without danger of observation from the aristocratic style of the only apparel they had been able to obtain; lastly, Mucius Scævola carried to them certificates of citizenship.

The necessary means to be taken to secure the safety of the abbé would often come from the most unexpected places, and it always proved so singularly opportune that it was evident

that it could only have been given by some personage knowing the secrets of the State. Famine was rampant in Paris, yet they daily found at the door of their hovel rations of white bread, always laid there by invisible hands. They recognized, or thought they did, the agent of their benefactions in Mucius Scævola, as they were ever timely and just as needed, but the noble tenants of the dilapidated garret never doubted that the unknown being who, with them, had celebrated mass on January 22, 1793, was their secret protector. A special prayer for him was added to their daily supplications; each night, each day these pious hearts prayed fervently for his happiness, prosperity, and redemption. God was implored to keep his feet from snares and to save him from his enemies, and to grant him a happy, long, and peaceful life.

Their gratitude, renewed daily, as it were, was impregnated with curiosity that grew more intense with each day. All the circumstances attending the advent of the stranger formed a ceaseless subject of conversation, conjectures were endless; this ultimately became a benefit of a special kind from their minds being thus occupied and distracted. They had quite resolved that, when he should attend on the next sad commemoration of the anniversary of the death of Louis XVI., the unknown should not be allowed to escape the due expression of their gratitude.

At length that night, so impatiently awaited, arrived. At midnight the heavy footfalls resounded on the wooden stairs. The chamber was already arranged for the sacrament, the altar dressed. This time the sisters opened the door and hurried to show a light at the entrance. Mademoiselle de Langeais even descended a few stairs that she might get a first glimpse of their benefactor.

"Come!" said she, in an entreating, trembling voice. "Come, thou art expected."

The man raised his head, looked gloomily at the nun, and made no answer. She felt as if an ice-cold blanket had fallen

upon her, and she kept silence. His aspect dried up the gratitude and curiosity of their hearts. It was probable he was less cold, less taciturn, less terrible than he seemed to these simple creatures to be, whose own emotions led them to expect a responsive echo of their flow of friendship. It was easy for them to decry that this mysterious one intended remaining a stranger, so they acquiesced with resignation. The abbé, though, fancied he detected a quickly repressed smile upon the visitor's lips, as he noted the preparations made for his reception. He listened to the mass, prayed, and disappeared immediately, refusing in courteous tones the invitation extended by Mademoiselle de Langeais to remain and partake of the humble fare they had prepared for him.

After Thermidor the 9th the sisters and the Abbé de Marolles could traverse Paris without fear. The aged abbé paid his first visit to the Queen of Roses, a perfumery store kept by Citizen and Citizeness Ragon, formerly the Court perfumers, and esteemed for their faithfulness to the Bourbons, and whom the Vendéens utilized as a means of communication with the princes and the committees of Royalists in Paris. Abbé de Marolles wore the clothing prescribed by the Code; as he was leaving the portal of the store, situated between the church of Saint-Roch and the Rue des Fondeurs, a mob of people crowding down the Rue Saint-Honoré prevented his departure.

"What is it?" he said to Madame Ragon.

"Nothing!" she replied, "but the tumbril and the executioner going to the Place Louis XV. Oh, we saw more than enough of that last year! But see now, only four days after the anniversary of the 21st of January, we can gaze upon it, that most horrid procession, with equanimity."

"How so?" inquired the abbé. "What you are saying is unchristian."

"But, Monsieur l'Abbé, this is the execution of Robes-

pierre's accomplices. They could not prevail to longer evade it, and, now, they in their turn are going the way they sent so many innocent ones."

The Rue Saint-Honoré was choked with the crowd which surged on like a wave. Above the ocean of heads the Abbé de Marolles, yielding to an irresistible impulse, saw, standing upright in the cart, the unknown visitor who but three days agone had joined in the second celebration of the mass of commemoration.

"Who is that?" he said, "that one standing——"

"The executioner," answered Monsieur Ragon, giving him the name he had under the monarchy.

"Help! help!" cried Madame Ragon. "Monsieur l'Abbé has fainted."

She quickly caught up a flask of toilet-vinegar and he was soon restored to consciousness.

"He must have given me," said the venerable abbé, "the handkerchief that the King used to wipe his brow as he was led to his martyrdom. Poor man! a heart had that steel-blade when all France was without one."

The perfumers thought the words of the abbé were those of delirium.

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